

University of Alberta

The Jacobean Royal Court: A Functional Description of the English Court under James I

by

Jennifer Shun-Yee Ng



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ABSTRACT

This essay concerns the English Royal Court under the reign of James I (1603-1625). It looks at the physical, political, cultural, and symbolic components of the Court through a sociological and anthropological framework, and focuses on the rituals and functions of the institution. By using the works of scholars concerned with centres and peripheries, ritualized behaviour, and performances, this essay shows that courtly processes often perceived as corrupt were necessary functions of the institution. The implications of this study are that the Court was a complex entity that exhibited both ritual and dynamism. The Court was sacred, central, structured, and porous. This understanding of the Court is significant, for as the central institution in early modern England, the Court was integral to the rituals and values of society. Therefore, an accurate conception of the Court is necessary to fully understand any component of Jacobean society.

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INTRODUCTION

The Royal Court was the central political, social, and cultural institution of early modern England. This institution was the "point of contact"¹ for the nation: it provided a physical site for interaction among social elites, a context for creating state policy, and acted as a model for cultural trends. The Court underpinned all major processes in early modern society, and was a vital component of the state's function. Although the institution was central to English society, there is no definitive history of the early modern Royal Court. Various political and cultural analyses of early modern courts exist; however, no accounts have attempted to construct a functional description of the institution that shows its general mode of operation. A functional understanding of the Court is important because it informs the nature of other contemporaneous processes: without a comprehensive understanding of the central institution in early modern England, an understanding of English politics and culture is similarly limited. In order to establish a definition, or at least a better understanding, of the Court, it is necessary to see the Court as a social institution comprised of individuals involved in regularized processes. Thus, the Royal Court can be examined by means of sociological and anthropological analyses. The benefits of such an approach are that it allows for a perspective of the institution as a whole, it focuses on regularized processes rather than on individual people or events, and it is independent of moral judgements of the Court. Through such an examination, one can achieve a foundational understanding of early modern Court society. Furthermore, this examination will serve as a case study for institutional operations in general.

¹ Geoffrey Elton, "Tudor Government: The Points of Contact: III. The Court", *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, Fifth Series, 26 (1976), p.211.

A functional understanding of the early modern Court is particularly significant for the Court under James I. The Jacobean Court has been subject to analyses that focus more on moral judgments of the institution than on courtly processes and operations. The Court under James I is associated with corruption and scandal, and most interpretations incorporate this judgment into any conclusions about the institution. This association with corruption stems from a teleological analysis of the Jacobean Court that uses the institution to assert a progression towards the English Civil War.² Since the Court must reflect the degrading and intolerable state of English society, teleological historians portray the institution as increasingly dislocated from the rest of the nation, and preoccupied with self-serving behaviour. This negative depiction of the Court parallels the typical characterization of James I, for such historians construe him as an extravagant monarch who was excessively devoted to his favourites. In addition to judgments based on moral terms of analysis, works on the institution tend to limit the definition of the Court to that of a political, cultural, spatial, or symbolic nature. Scholars that examine the Court generally address merely one of these components, and ignore the evidence that the Court was a composite of all of these elements. The Court therefore needs to be interpreted on an institutional basis, and this can be accomplished by using an anthropological and sociological framework. This framework does not limit the Court to one of its components, impose a teleological agenda on the institution, nor assess the Court according to moral sentiments.

Such a framework should be informed by scholarship that addresses the nature of institutions in society, the characteristics of social behaviour and interaction, and more specifically the functions of the courtly institution. Works that address the operations and position of the institution in society are *The Elementary Forms of*

² S. R. Gardiner claims that while Henry "laid the foundation of the strong monarchy of the Tudors", James "sowed the seeds of revolution and disaster", Samuel R. Gardiner, *History of England: From the Accession of James I to the Outbreak of the Civil War 1603-1642*, vol. V (London, 1883), p.316. Perez Zagorin argues that the opposition between the Court and the Country during the Stuart monarchy led to the English Civil War, Perez Zagorin, *The Court and the Country: The Beginnings of the English Revolution* (London, 1969), p.32.

Religious Life by Emile Durkheim³, *Center and Periphery: Essays on Microsociology* by Edward Shils⁴, and Mary Douglas' *How Institutions Think*.⁵ These works illustrate that the institution was perceived as a natural and acceptable component of society, and that institutions had a fundamental role in organizing and directing their members. *The Court Society* by Norbert Elias looks specifically at the institution of the early modern European Court, and supports the image of the Court as a sociological institution with regularized processes and functions⁶. Clifford Geertz' *Negara: The Theatre-State in Nineteenth-Century Bali* discusses the concept of courtly display, and argues that while forms of display might appear to be extravagant, they had specific and necessary roles within the courtly institution⁷. Similarly, the works of Erving Goffman, specifically *Interaction Ritual* and *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, elucidate the purposes affecting individuals' actions, and suggest that seemingly corrupt acts of courtly behaviour were in fact ritualized methods of interaction⁸. Anna Bryson's work *From Courtesy to Civility: Changing Codes of Conduct in Early Modern England* offers an analysis of individual behaviour specific to early modern England, and stresses the importance of manners and civility for members of this society⁹. *Ambition and Privilege: The Social Tropes of Elizabethan Courtesy Theory* by Frank Whigham illustrates that one common use of manners by early modern courtiers was its employment to restrict access of non-courtly members to the Court¹⁰. An analysis of the Jacobean Court through such sociological and anthropological frameworks will produce a more

³ Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (Oxford, 2001).

⁴ Edward Shils, *Center and Periphery: Essays in Microsociology* (Chicago, 1975).

⁵ Mary Douglas, *How Institutions Think* (Syracuse, 1986).

⁶ Norbert Elias, *The Court Society* (Oxford, 1983).

⁷ Clifford Geertz, *Negara: The Theatre State in Nineteenth-Century Bali* (Princeton, 1980).

⁸ Erving Goffman, *Interaction Ritual* (New York, 1967); Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (New York, 1959).

⁹ Anna Bryson, *From Courtesy to Civility: Changing Codes of Conduct in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 1998).

¹⁰ Frank Whigham, *Ambition and Privilege: The Social Tropes of Elizabethan Courtesy Theory* (California, 1984).

comprehensive understanding of the Court that is independent of teleological and moral impositions.

A HISTORIOGRAPHY OF THE COURT

The Physical Court

One of the primary features of the early modern Court was its physical or spatial fact. While historians consent to the significance of the physical Court as a setting for courtly affairs and interactions, there is disagreement among Jacobean scholars regarding the establishments that should be considered official constituents of the institution. Some scholars assert a narrow definition of the Court that merely encompasses the buildings and persons of the Royal Household, while others argue that the Court embodied all locations that served as backdrops to courtly affairs, or involved the actions of courtly persons. These distinctions illustrate that even at a very basic level, the Jacobean Court is an object of study that has not been effectively defined.

A narrow interpretation of the Court involves an understanding of the institution that includes only the physical establishments that housed the monarch and his immediate entourage.¹ Robert Shephard claims that the Court included "those individuals who had both regular access to the monarch and influence with him", and it would usually comprise those positions held by "Privy Chamber or Bedchamber

¹ Levy Peck claims that David Starkey's interpretation of the Court is very narrow, for he identifies the Court "as only those who were attendant on the king", entailing his Household and his Privy Chamber; Levy Peck, "The Mental World of the Jacobean Court: An Introduction", in *The Mental World of the Jacobean Court*, ed. Linda Levy Peck (Cambridge, 1991), p.3. Likewise, John Adamson states that in theory the Court "was where the king resided", John Adamson, "The Kingdoms of England and Great Britain: The Tudor and Stuart Courts 1509-1714", in *The Princely Courts of Europe: Ritual, Politics and Culture under the Ancien Regime 1500-1750*, ed. John Adamson (London, 1999), p.95.

attendants, the principal Secretary, or Privy Councillors".² Neil Cuddy posits a similar definition of the Court, for he states that while James' accession initiated changes in the Bedchamber, the outer layers of the Court, which included positions in the inner and outer Chamber, remained the least affected.³ These definitions of the Court assert that the boundaries of the institution immediately surrounded the Royal Household and its inhabitants.⁴

Other historians believe that the Court is not easily identified, for although it had a distinct nucleus, its peripheries were "vaguely defined".⁵ The Court could include such establishments as court pulpits,⁶ James' hunting lodge at Theobalds,⁷ the Privy Council, the Court of Star Chamber, the Lord Chancellor, the Lord Keeper of the Great Seal, the Secretaries of State, the Masters of Requests, the Court of Exchequer, the Court of First Fruits and Tenths, the Court of Wards and Liveries, the Pipe Office, the Court of King's Bench, Common Pleas, and the Chancery.⁸ Furthermore, Pauline Croft posits that court culture was "as much the creation of the great aristocratic households of London as of the monarchy itself".⁹ According to this definition of the institution, the Court was a large, polycentric entity that extended

² Robert Shephard, "Court Factions in Early Modern England," *The Journal of Modern History*, 64, 4 (1992), p.724.

³ Neil Cuddy, "The Revival of the Entourage; The Bedchamber of James I, 1603-1625", in *The English Court: From the Wars of the Roses to the Civil War*, ed. David Starkey (London, 1987), p.181.

⁴ Croft claims that "outside the court circle of those who saw the king regularly, relatively few Scottish nobles married in England and the level of assimilation at court was far less than James had hoped", Pauline Croft, *King James* (Houndmills, 2003), p.67.

⁵ R. Malcolm Smuts, *Court Culture and the Origins of a Royalist Tradition in Early Stuart England* (Philadelphia, 1987), p.41.

⁶ Peter E. McCullough. *Sermons at Court: Politics and Religion in Elizabethan and Jacobean Preaching* (Cambridge, 1998).

⁷ G. P. Akrigg, *Jacobean Pageant: Or the Court of King James I* (London, 1962), p.21.

⁸ Akrigg, p.28.

⁹ Pauline Croft, "Robert Cecil and the Early Jacobean Court," in *The Mental World of the Jacobean Court*, ed. Linda Levy Peck (Cambridge, 1991), p.136.

well beyond the confines of the royal palace.¹⁰ The institution embodied all affairs that involving individuals associated with the monarch or his attendants.

The Political Court

Another characterization of the Jacobean Court is that it consisted of early modern English politics. Although most historians acknowledge that politics were a major component of courtly affairs, some believe that politics were dominated by competing factions, while others argue for a more fluid and dynamic political sphere. The significance we place on factions at the Court affects our understanding of the organization of courtly individuals, and the manner in which they interacted and perceived one another. Thus, an understanding the Court requires a comprehension of the status and role of courtly factions within the institution.

Historians who emphasize a factious Court argue that since patronage structured the institution, and not all individuals were able to gain access to the king, "suitors attached themselves to those in closer proximity to or in attendance upon the monarch".¹¹ These followings are called factions, and consist of groups of men connected by ties of interest, family, locality, a shared faith, or a common policy.¹² Historians who accept the prominence of factions at the Court portray the institution as influenced by certain groups or individuals and their followers. The courtiers who led these groups included Robert Cecil, Robert Carr, the Howards, and George

¹⁰ James Knowles asserts that Carr "transgressed the boundaries of the English court", for he was "a Scot raised to the English peerage, he moved from the bedchamber to the bureaucracy, and...broke the English rule separating the inner and out chamber heads in the court structure", James Knowles, "Crack Kisses Not Staves: Sexual Politics and Court Masques in 1613-1614", in *The Crisis of 1614 and the Addled Parliament: Literary and Historical Perspectives*, eds. Stephen Clucas and Rosalind Davies (Hampshire, 2003), p.145.

¹¹ Kevin Sharpe, "Faction at the Early Stuart Court", *History Today*, xxxiii (1983), p.39.

¹² Sharpe, p.40.

Villiers.¹³ The implications of a factious Court are that individual courtiers required networks of support to succeed at Court, and that they were required to act according to the agenda of their faction in order to maintain their position in the following, and consequently their position at Court.

More recent historical works argue that the Jacobean Court was not as structured as the model of a Court primarily ordered by factions. Historians who support this interpretation of courtly politics concur with those supporting factions in that patronage was the central component of early modern politics. However, they argue that the patronage system was complex, and that it was not always composed of distinct and isolated factions.¹⁴ "Alliances were fluid at the Jacobean Court",¹⁵ and clients at the Court "often applied to many patrons".¹⁶ John Adamson describes the Court as "a series of separate and potentially competing 'foyers of patronage',"¹⁷ so it consequently provided individuals with a "variety of routes to patronage and preferment".¹⁸ Individual courtiers were not restricted by the concerns of their factions, for they were governed by "a code of conduct that was premised upon a far more complex series of ethical imperatives" including honour, chivalric duty, and

¹³ Historians who portray the courtly politics as a function of competing factions include S.J. Houston, *James I* (London, 1973), Bryan Bevan, *King James: VI of Scotland and I of England* (London, 1966), Robert Shephard, "Court Factions in Early Modern England", Roger Lockyer, *James VI and I* (New York, 1998), and Chester Dunning, "The Fall of Sir Thomas Overbury and the Embassy to Russia in 1613", *Sixteenth Century Journal*, 22, 4 (1991).

¹⁴ John Cramsie argues that the Court involved interrelationships and interactions "between people, institutions, and ideas", John Cramsie, "Commercial Projects and the Fiscal Policy of James VI and I", *The Historical Journal*, 43, 2 (2000), p.346.

¹⁵ Linda Levy Peck, *Northampton: Patronage and Policy at the Court of James I* (London, 1982), p.32.

¹⁶ Linda Levy Peck, *Court Patronage and Corruption in Early Stuart England* (London, 1990), p.22. Peck also specifically asserts that "the fluidity and fragility of patronage networks belies the menace of factional rivalry", p.54.

¹⁷ Adamson, p.14. The fluidity of Court politics was augmented by James' "accessible style" of governing: James exhibited a "willingness to hear all points of view, so that now even his most trenchant critics were left out", David L. Smith, *A History of the Modern British Isles, 1603-1707: The Double Crown* (Malden, MA, 2002), p.44.

¹⁸ Adamson, p.39.

familial or religious obligation.¹⁹ This approach to courtly politics suggests that the Court was a complex institution that exhibited shifting alliances rather than permanent factions, and diverse motivations that could be unique to an individual courtier. Although the courtier might belong to a network of individuals and be obligated to this group on some level, he was nevertheless able to consider his personal desires, as the Court was open to other influences than faction struggles alone.

The Cultural Court

Historians also argue that the Court acted as a model for national cultural trends. Scholars understand court culture as a prominent feature of the courtly institution, and agree that the extravagance and superiority of courtly forms exceeded other cultural expressions in early modern society. However, historiographical interpretations of courtly culture are not homogeneous, for historians characterize this culture in different ways, and they disagree about the relationship of the Court's culture to that of the rest of the nation.

Historians with a teleological perspective of the Court as a precursor to the English Civil War argue that Jacobean courtly culture was exclusive and inaccessible to outsiders of the institution.²⁰ While the Elizabethan Court employed such forms as

¹⁹ Adamson, p.19.

²⁰ Robert Ashton argues that there was an "allegedly stark contrast between the sexual 'mores' of Court and Country", Robert Ashton, *James I by his Contemporaries: An Account of his Career and Character as Seen by Some of His Contemporaries* (London, 1969), p.228. Caroline Bingham claims that it is not surprising that the country gentry "who encountered the morals, manners, and fashions of the Court only through rumour, correspondence, or the occasional contacts...imagined the prodigality and depravity of the Court to be greater than they were", Caroline Bingham, *James I: Of England* (London, 1981), p.86. William McElwee states that "the spreading tales of court scandals and court debauches" initiated the "rift between Court and Country which was to be James' worst legacy to his descendants and was to make the pattern of politics for the next century", William McElwee, *The Wisest Fool in Christendom: The Reign of King James I and VI* (London, 1958), p.175-176. Also, David M. Loades argues that the dominance of Buckingham at Court isolated

public entries and progresses, these were gradually diminished under James, who preferred "private and informal entertainments such as hunting".²¹ Masques became "one of the characteristic features of the Jacobean Court",²² and unlike other mediums of court culture, the masque was "an inward-looking art form" for it was "not propaganda for the general public".²³ The Court's preference for private forms of entertainment was "symptomatic of one of the major shortcomings of James' English kingship because they were the wrong kind of theatre".²⁴ We are told that pageantry was necessary to maintain the monarchy's hold on the nation's affections, and that James' failure to do so resulted in an erosion of popular support.²⁵

While some historians argue for the exclusivity of Jacobean courtly culture, others believe that the culture of the Court did promote the institution in English society. Akrigg states that the Court displayed "to the world...the wealth and greatness of the kingdom as reflected by the magnificence which surrounded the monarch".²⁶ Not only do these historians assert that the Jacobean Court promoted the monarchy through its culture, some even feel that court culture linked the Court closely to English society because courtly forms of culture were synonymous with those of non-courtly London.²⁷ The Court "easily absorbed new styles and ideas developing in London or among aristocrats with no formal connection to the royal household, just as country peers and gentry sometimes learned to appreciate court fashions during visits to London".²⁸ This interpretation suggests that the exclusivity

the institution from the rest of the nation, David M. Loades, *Politics and Nation: England 1450-1660* (Malden, MA, 1999), p.308. See also Derek Hirst, *Authority and Conflict: England 1603-1658* (Cambridge, Mass., 1986).

²¹ Levy Peck, "The Mental World of the Jacobean Court: An Introduction", p.7.

²² Houston, p.25.

²³ Maurice Lee, Jr., *Great Britain's Solomon: James VI and I in His Three Kingdoms* (Urbana, 1990), p.150.

²⁴ Lee, p.151.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ Akrigg, p.24.

²⁷ David Lindley states that a "complementarity [was] believed to subsist between the court and society as a whole", David Lindley, *The Trials of Frances Howard: Fact and Fiction at the Court of King James* (London, 1993), p.57.

²⁸ Smuts, *Court Culture and the Origins of a Royalist Tradition in Early Stuart England*, p.4.

of the courtly institution did not necessarily entail an environment that was distinct from other sectors of English society.²⁹ If the Court's culture was related to the culture of London society, then the Court cannot be considered an internalized entity lacking compatible qualities with popular sentiment. Therefore, this interpretation of the Court contrasts with that of the Court as an isolated institution. While diverse assessments of courtly culture are significant for our understanding of early modern cultural forms, they also have broader implications for the character of the Court itself.

The Symbolic Court

The historiography of the Jacobean Court asserts that in addition to acting as the physical, political, and cultural centre of the nation, the Court also embodied a symbolic realm. This symbolic component is one area of Court historiography that considers multiple aspects of the institution. Political interactions entailed symbolic behaviour, courtly culture represented the magnificence of the monarchy, and the centrality of the physical Court signified the fundamental position of the Court in the nation.

One of the functions of the Court was to glorify the image of the monarchy. This function was achieved through ceremonial displays, ostentatious spectacles, and shows of hospitality.³⁰ Courtly display could also exhibit a specific image of the monarch, including such portrayals of James as Solomon the wise king, Constantine the Christian emperor, or Augustus the patron of the arts and beautifier of his capital.³¹ Such imagery existed in many areas of the Court, for even in the royal

²⁹ David Mathew states that the houses built by the Jacobean aristocracy were "closely linked to the court" because they were built "from the profits of court offices and windfalls", David Mathew, *James I* (London, 1967), p.239.

³⁰ Adamson, p.100.

³¹ Lee, p.153. Gail Kern Paster claims that the most significant aspect of Jacobean architecture was "its association with the idea of the heroic through its ability to create and verify a historical record", Gail Kern Paster, "Ben Jonson and the Uses of Architecture", *Renaissance Quarterly*, 27, 3 (1974), p.311. Roy Strong states that

chapels, "iconographic schemes...emphasized dynastic as much as religious claims".³² The area of the Court that has been most commonly examined as symbolic is that involving the court masque. The illusionistic theatres of the masque made their audiences "living emblems of the aristocratic hierarchy",³³ and those who took part in the masques confirmed their membership in the courtly community.³⁴ The overt symbolism of the masque text was not always significant to the performance, for the audience "did not always recognize the message of the play, or accept it if they did".³⁵ Rather, the audience often watched the monarch instead of the play.³⁶ Therefore the symbolism of the masque, as well other forms of courtly culture, would have directed attention ultimately towards the centrality of the king.

The symbolic nature of the Court was also prevalent in the political affairs of the institution. Historians often associated courtly patronage with performance, for those involved in a patron-client relationship were required to follow the strict behavioural dictates.³⁷ Patronage involved "a self-consciously constructed language and a set of symbols signifying and reinforcing the bond between patron and client" in which the individual courtier adopted a series of roles "to win favour from a monarch or court patron".³⁸ Since Renaissance culture emphasized the metaphors of

Prince Henry was "the driving force behind a sequence of festivals that were designed explicitly to present himself and his policy to both court and public", Roy Strong, *Henry, Prince of Wales: And England's Lost Renaissance* (New York: 1986), p.139.

³² McCullough, p.22.

³³ Stephen Orgel, *The Illusion of Power: Political Theatre in the English Renaissance* (Berkeley, 1975), p.37.

³⁴ Jerzy Limon asserts that court masques can be treated as "unique insights into not only courtly matters, but also into the nature of the universe, revealing the laws that govern it", Jerzy Limon, "The Masque of Stuart Culture", in *The Mental World of the Jacobean Court*, ed. Linda Levy Peck (Cambridge, 1991), p.211.

³⁵ Natalie Mears, "Courts, Courtiers, and Culture in Tudor England," *The Historical Journal*, 46, 3 (2003), p.714. Limon claims that the texts of masques directed "the implied reader to other systems without which the masque text cannot be decoded", Limon, p.209.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ Levy Peck, *Court Patronage and Corruption in Early Stuart England*, p.21.

³⁸ Linda Levy Peck, "'For a King Not to be Bountiful Were a Fault': Perspectives on Court Patronage in Early Stuart England," *The Journal of British Studies*, 25, 1 (1986), 34-35. Anne Somerset also suggests that the courtier was required to perform a role, for the "archetypal courtier was a despicable figure who was malevolent,

theatre and of role- playing, the political role of the courtier would have obligated him to act according to certain symbolic standards in order to achieve his personal agenda.

The historiography of the Jacobean Court is generally concerned with physical, political, or cultural components of the institution. Recent historiography of the Court attempts to understand the institution as more than an amalgam of these components, and acknowledges that the Court operated within a framework that was symbolic to members of early modern society. Although the study of the Court as symbolic provides a more comprehensive portrayal of the institution, a more effective approach allows for an analysis of the simultaneous political, spatial, cultural, and symbolic components of the Jacobean Court.

selfish and false beneath his polished exterior", Anne Somerset, *Unnatural Murder: Poison at the Court of James I* (London, 1997), p.32. Astington claims that display and observance were constant features of court life, John H. Astington, *English Court Theatre 1558-1642* (Cambridge, 1999), p.11. Maurice Lee, Jr. describes court life as following the rules established by the monarch, Lee, p.130.

I.

THE COURT AS CENTRAL

A more comprehensive understanding of the Jacobean Royal Court can be achieved by examining its central position in early modern England. The Court is consistently represented as the political, social, and cultural centre of the realm, and therefore an understanding of this centrality will illuminate the role of the institution in society. Historians attribute the centrality of the Court to its association with the monarch: suitors to the royal court ultimately sought access to the king or queen, and through this access, the opportunity of royal favor or reward. The desire for royal favour ensured that "the Court was a natural goal for any man of ambition,"¹ and was therefore a site of competing individuals. Since access to favour was limited, individual suitors "attached themselves in closer proximity to or in attendance upon the monarch."² These relationships between suitors created networks of patronage, and posited the Court as the structural core of these systems. While historians have produced many studies of the structure and composition of these patronage networks, and consequently of the Court as the structural axis of these networks, little attention has been given to the nature and reasons for the Court's position as the ideological centre of the nation. The ideological centrality of the Jacobean Court can be explored through such sociological models proposed by Edward Shils, Emile Durkheim, and Norbert Elias. By examining the Court through the concepts of the centre and the periphery, the sacred and the profane, and the institution as part of a system of

¹ David Starkey, "Introduction: Court History in Perspective", *The English Court: From the Wars of the Roses to the Civil War*, ed. David Starkey (London, 1987), p.1.

² Sharpe, p.39.

dependencies, a better understanding of the Court's function in early modern society can be achieved.

In *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* Durkheim asserts that religious perspectives presuppose a classification of things into two classes generally designated by the terms "sacred" and "profane."³ The sacred encompasses "beliefs, myths [and]...legends,"⁴ and is regarded as "superior in dignity and power to profane things, and particularly to man."⁵ Durkheim's conception of the sacred and profane is directly applicable to the institution of the Court when considered with Shils' association of the two classifications with the centre and the periphery. Shils posits that the structure of a society consists of both central and peripheral components: the central constituent of society correlates with the charismatic, the sacred, and the holy, while the peripheral is equivalent to the profane, the routine, and the secular.⁶ Though Shils claims that the centre and the periphery are "not...spatially located phenomenon[a],"⁷ he describes the central zone of society as one that "is expressed by the ruling authorities of the society."⁸ In early modern England, the values expressed by the "ruling authorities" were those involved with the Royal Court and with court culture. Thus, the central zone in Jacobean society can be defined as a phenomenon more or less spatially located in the Court. The parallel between the Court and the centre relates the institution to the sacred components of society, and therefore an analysis of the Court's position in early modern England can be enhanced by a study of the nature of the sacred.

Durkheim's characterization of the sacred as "superior in dignity and power to profane things" imbues the sacred with a privileged status in society. In addition to being the structural centre of early modern society, as the setting of the monarchy, the Royal Court was regarded by contemporaries as the pinnacle of English society. In *The Queenes Arcadia*, a play presented to the Court in 1605, Samuel Daniel describes

³ Durkheim, p.36.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ Durkheim, p.37.

⁶ Shils, xxxiii.

⁷ Shils, p.3.

⁸ Shils, p.4.

majesty as an entity above and unlike any other, as the "arts of the Throne, which none that are below / The sphere of action, and the exercise of power, can truly show...For majestic, and power, can nothing see / Without it selfe, that can sight-worthy be."⁹ The supremacy and uniqueness of the majesty radiated from the monarch onto the institution of which he was an integral part: the Court was the physical embodiment of the king's sacredness. The distinctiveness of the Court from the rest of the nation exemplifies the nature of sacred entities that are by Durkheim's definition "separate beings" characterized "by a discontinuity between them and profane beings."¹⁰ In order for a man to enter into intimate relations with sacred things, he must "[rid] himself of what is profane in him."¹¹ This relationship of the sacred and profane suggests that the Court was not only superior and distinct in early modern society, but that it also operated on a different plane than any other institution or process in England. Court functions and processes were exclusive to those members of the courtly setting, and those who desired to become part of this environment were required to learn the rituals of the sacred institution.

Although the sacred nature of the Court rendered it distinct from the rest of the nation, Shils' conception of centre and periphery indicate that the institution was nevertheless integrated in contemporary social processes. To Shils, the central zone of society corresponds to the society's central value system, and the values inherent in this system determine the nature of society itself.¹² As the centre of English society, the Court was an exemplar of the beliefs that prevailed throughout the nation. The connection between the Court and the rest of society through the central value system displays the reasons for contemporary concern about the morality of the Court. Although moral corruption was present throughout early modern society, the Court represented a particularly virulent source: contemporaries believed that a complementarity subsisted between the Court and society as a whole, and that "if the

⁹ Samuel Daniel, "The Queenes Arcadia: A Pastorall Trage-comedie presented to her Majestie and her Ladies, by the Vniuersitie of Oxford in Christs Church, in August last.1605," in *Early English Books Online*, ed. Alfred W. Pollard (Ann Arbor, Mich., 1999), <http://www.library.ualberta.ca/databases/databaseinfo/index.cfm?ID=3089>.

¹⁰ Durkheim, p.221.

¹¹ Durkheim, p.230.

¹² Shils, p.4.

Court [was] corrupt...then society [would] be contaminated."¹³ Since the Court represented the "center of the order of symbols, of values and beliefs, which govern[ed] the society,"¹⁴ a corrupt Court morality indicated a corresponding corruption of the values that ordered the early modern community. Although the Court held a privileged position in society, the relationship between courtiers and individuals in the outermost structure was "a continuous process of interdependence and antinomy."¹⁵ Even those individuals that had little contact with the Court were affected by the nature of courtly values, as these values shaped the standards of behavior in the nation as a whole. Thus, although the Court was esteemed as the most central and elevated institution of society, the relationship between the centre and the periphery shows that it was not without context, and that it shared a situation of interdependence with Jacobean England.

The distinct yet interdependent status of the Jacobean Court implies that less central components of early modern society possessed similar, but less sacred versions of courtly values. One of the main hypotheses of *Center and Periphery* is that the "relationship to the center [is] one of the underlying properties on the basis of which deference or status [is] granted."¹⁶ Value systems are distributed along a range, and the central value system is constituted by the values "which are pursued and affirmed by the elites of the constituent subsystems."¹⁷ According to Shils' conception of value systems, the localities of early modern England can be interpreted as not only related to, but also in some respects representative of, the Royal Court. Although outsiders to the Court did not have an absolute understanding of courtly values and processes, their own less sacred values were commensurable to those of the Court. In an article on the early modern Court, Natalie Mears suggests that individuals outside the Court "may have held political principles and been prepared to act on them, just as those at court did."¹⁸ Mears' proposal suggests that

¹³ Lindley, p.57.

¹⁴ Shils, p.3.

¹⁵ Shils, vii.

¹⁶ Shils, xxxvii.

¹⁷ Shils, p.4.

¹⁸ Mears, p.720.

outsiders to the Court had similar perspectives and desires to those attending the Court, and that the separation between the two types of suitors did not discourage outsiders from exhibiting courtly models of behavior. In fact, the points of commonality between the Court and the localities were necessary to the status of the Court, for they entailed "an affirmative attitude towards established authority"¹⁹; in practice, this was achieved in part by the "distribution of roles and reward to persons possessing the appropriate qualities which in various ways symbolize[d] degrees of proximity and authority."²⁰ The Court thus had a reciprocal relationship with the peripheries in that it bestowed reward upon individuals, while by participating in this form of patronage the individuals in turn confirmed the Court's central and authoritative position in society. The commensurability of values between the centre and the periphery, and the role of the periphery in affirming the authority of the centre show that the localities were representative of, and necessary to, the Royal Court.

The interdependent relationship between the Court and the rest of the nation can be analyzed at a local level in addition to an institutional one. In *The Court Society* Norbert Elias argues that the individual and society are not two different substances at rest, but are rather processes that can be distinguished but not separated.²¹ While the historic tradition "postulates individuals who are ultimately without relation,"²² individuals should instead be regarded as "open, mutually related sub-systems, linked by interdependences."²³ The reciprocal relationship between the centre and the periphery does not then relate merely to the entities of the Court and the Country, but also to individual suitors or outsiders to the Court, linked in symbiotic and hierarchical affiliations with other individuals. Elias' perspective of the individual reconciles an institutional approach with local and more personal terms of analysis. David Starkey criticizes Geoffrey Elton's institutional approach to the early modern Court because he feels that the personality of the monarch was more

¹⁹ Shils, p.5.

²⁰ Shils, p.6.

²¹ Elias, p.20.

²² Elias, p.24.

²³ Elias, p.26.

important²⁴: "cutting across 'the continuity of institutions and offices of the household' was the change of royal personality."²⁵ Starkey's comment on Elton's approach to court history implies that institutional and personal modes of analysis are incompatible, yet Elias' definition of the individual proposes that society is composed of networks of interrelated persons. It is therefore possible to analyze the court on an institutional level, but still take into account individual personality and motive. Starkey contrasts James' style of rule with that of Elizabeth I and Charles I, characterizing James as a 'participatory' monarch, and Elizabeth and Charles as 'distant' monarchs with regards to access.²⁶ Since according to Elias individuals and societies are related processes, a study of the Court's centrality necessitates a study of the nature and movements of those involved in courtly practices. Although it was the Court as an institution that possessed a sacred nature in society, the monarch and individual courtier were required to act according to these sacred standards. Starkey's distinction between participatory and distant monarchs is therefore a valuable observation of the Court, as it reveals the central values of the society under different monarchs. However, Elias' model demands an examination of the Court on a broader level, for since individuals are sub-systems linked by interdependences, one needs to understand the nature of these linkages before one can truly evaluate an individual. Starkey's criticism of Elton's approach to the Court is thus misguided, as the characterization of James as a participatory monarch does not conflict with notions of courtly relations with the localities; indeed, Starkey's characterization only emphasizes the importance of a sociological analysis of the Court, for the assertion that James was a participatory monarch is meaningless without first evaluating the context of access.

As well as elucidating the general nature of the Court's centrality, the sociological models of analysis are directly applicable to historiographical issues surrounding the Jacobean Court. One of the prevalent characterizations of the

²⁴ Elton believes that the Court should be understood as "a fully-fledged institution" instead of an entity "covering certain people, certain behaviour, certain attitudes", Elton, p.211.

²⁵ Starkey, p.6.

²⁶ Starkey, p.8.

Jacobean Court is its position of opposition to the 'Country.' Historians argue that the gap between the Court and the Country increased during James' reign because of the nature of courtly culture, and the monopoly held by favourites over royal patronage. The nature of courtly patronage contributed to the gap between the Court and the Country because Jacobean court culture was private in nature: although pageantry was necessary "to maintain the hold of monarchy on English affections," James' court spent its money "in ways that provided nothing for the entertainment or edification of the general public."²⁷ In addition to creating distance between the Court and the Country by providing exclusive forms of entertainment, courtly culture also distanced the Court through its connection to scandal. William McElwee argues that "the spreading tales of court scandals and court debauches had a direct political consequence"²⁸ by affecting negotiations between Salisbury and the Commons, and hence "marked the beginning of that rift between Court and Country which was to be James' worst legacy to his descendants."²⁹ The gap between the Court and the Country due to courtly culture was augmented by the isolation of the Court on a political plane. Sharpe argues that the dominance of Buckingham at the Jacobean Court defied the central purpose of patronage, this purpose being "the attachment to the court of those of substance in the country and the representation at court of attitudes and policies voiced in the country."³⁰ Buckingham thwarted the patronage system by giving honours to "purely court creatures with no estates or influence in the locality."³¹ The status of Jacobean court culture and patronage thus supports the prevailing historiographical tradition of the separation of the Court and the Country that started under James I. Robert Ashton believes that by 1625, it is doubtful "that much could have been done the bridge the gap between Court and Country."³² This trend of separation continued under Charles I, and ultimately led to the civil war.³³

²⁷ Lee, p.151.

²⁸ McElwee, p.175.

²⁹ McElwee, p.176.

³⁰ Sharpe, p.43.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² Ashton, p.228.

³³ Zagorin, p.32.

Although there is abundant historical evidence for the separation of the Court from the Country, the sociological models suggest that this separation is a misinterpretation, or at very least an exaggeration, of the position of the Court under James I. While outsiders to the Court might have expressed concern about the nature of courtly practices, they were nevertheless still interpolated into the same social system as those members of the central institution. Shils acknowledges that there is unity among the elites of a society based on their degree of proximity to the centre.³⁴ In comparison, individuals on the periphery have a sense of being on "the outside," through "a painful feeling of being excluded from the vital zone which surrounds the center of society"; however, these peripheral beings continue "to be intensely attracted to and influenced by the outlook and style of the life of the center."³⁵ This representation of those on the peripheries implies that feelings of disparity are natural functions of their relationship to the centre, and that this disparity does not indicate an unnatural separation between the two composites. Though those on the peripheries might feel physically distanced from those in the centre, they are still drawn towards the centre, and are affected by occurrences in the centre. In John Fletcher's play *The Lovers' Progress* courtly practices pervade settings outside the Court, and function as a standard for appropriate behaviour. Dorilaus represents his behaviour as "a special favour / [That] may stand an example in the court / For courtesie, [as] It is the Clyants duty / To wait upon his patron."³⁶ Dorilaus' suggestion that his behaviour exhibits courtly standards displays both his knowledge of courtly practices, and his desire to emulate these sacred forms. Furthermore, this behaviour supports Shils' claim that the center is "the standard which is derived from the perception, correct or incorrect, of its conduct and bearing."³⁷ The assumption that the Jacobean Court's preference for private forms of entertainment and Buckingham's monopoly of patronage isolated the Court from the rest of the nation is therefore misguided. The continuing attendance of suitors to the Court indicates that the institution still functioned as "the

³⁴ Shils, p.12.

³⁵ Shils, p.14.

³⁶ John Fletcher, "The Lovers' Progress," in *The Dramatic Works in the Beaumont and Fletcher Canon*, ed. Fredson Bowers, vol. X (Cambridge, 1996), V.i.1.10-13.

³⁷ Shils, p.299.

center of the order of symbols, of values and beliefs, which governed the society."³⁸ While James might have limited the number of individuals who had direct access to the Court, this decrease in access would have done little to affect the overall centrality of the Court in the nation.

The integral position of the Court in early modern England can be further supported with examples of the interaction between courtly and peripheral processes. Shils' model of society entails the existence of "deference institutions" that operate by confirming and conferring deference.³⁹ The deference system "extends throughout the length and breadth of the society": everyone falls into it, and it envelops institutions and takes them into account.⁴⁰ As the Court was the main site for bestowing royal favour, it can be interpreted as the central deference institution in early modern England. Although the historiography of the Court has established that royal bounty was dispensed "through a system of court patronage,"⁴¹ Shils' description of the deference system implies that the desire to obtain reward did not stem merely from personal gain, but also because of the reward's association with the sacred centre. In *The Princely Courts of Europe*, John Adamson states that noblemen and affluent gentlemen arranged to spend part of the year in the capital to "give attendance" at court "even though they might never acquire a formal position within the household."⁴² The regular attendance at Court by such suitors supports Shils' model of the central value system, as this system "rests on the need which human beings have for incorporation into something which transcends and transfigures their concrete individual existence."⁴³ Suitors to the Court were therefore drawn to the Court because of the institution's sacred status. This desire to be in contact with the Court's sacredness confirms the proposition that the Court was linked to the Country by more than political ties: suitors to the Court gave regular attendance as an act of affirmation to the monarch's power and his central institution. The granting of

³⁸ Shils, p. 3.

³⁹ Shils, p. 296.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ Linda Levy Peck, "For a King Not to be Bountiful Were a Fault": Perspectives on Court Patronage in Early Stuart England," p. 32.

⁴² John Adamson, p. 96.

⁴³ Shils, p. 7.

deference stemmed from the Court and pervaded all levels of early modern society. For example, court chaplaincies were required for those that sought any higher preferment in the church, and were a prerequisite for any promotion to the episcopal bench.⁴⁴ This prerequisite shows that even those that did not consider the Court their main aspiration were affected by the main deference institution. The Court was also the main source of patronage for many poets and playwrights: this patronage included employment with the crown itself, or through contacts made at court, in the households of the greater nobility.⁴⁵ Thus, even when the Court did not directly distribute patronage, it affected patronage relationships in other settings. The status of the Court as a deference institution therefore illuminates its function as the main source of bounty in the nation, and emphasizes its integral position in all facets of early modern society.

The sociological models of Edward Shils, Emile Durkheim, and Norbert Elias elucidate the sacred centrality of the Jacobean Court. While historians have often emphasized contemporaries' negative perceptions of the Court as corrupt and immoral, an analysis of the role and functions of the Court as the centre of society shows that this emphasis is misguided. Though the Third Earl of Southampton found "so much quiet and content" in the countryside, that he "should hardly ever brooke any other,"⁴⁶ these sentiments do not indicate that the Court had a less revered position in the nation. Regardless of individual opinions of the Court's character, the function of the Court as the central zone of society demanded that it was the embodiment of English values and beliefs, and that it benefited from "an affirmative attitude toward established authority."⁴⁷ The position of the Court as the nation's central zone also shows its relationship with the localities: though it was distinct with respect to sacredness, it still shared an interactive affiliation with the peripheries. The sociological model of the Court also accounts for the evaluation of individuals, as they formed the networks of interdependences that composed society. However, a

⁴⁴ McCullough, p. 4.

⁴⁵ Adamson, p. 106.

⁴⁶ C. C. Stopes. *The Life of Henry, Third Earl of Southampton. Shakespeare's Patron* (New York, 1969), p. 449.

⁴⁷ Shils, p. 5.

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stress on the nature of individuals in the courtly institution is impossible without the contextual framework of larger social processes. This approach also dispels the interpretation of the Court as distanced from the Country. Through a sociological approach, then, the Jacobean Court can be construed as a central and integral part of the nation, sacred in status and prevalent in all constituents of society.

The sacred status of the Court entailed that it was central to all political, cultural, and social processes in society. A study of the Court that does not acknowledge all of these processes therefore does not provide an accurate depiction of the institution. The Court cannot be represented as merely an embodiment of English politics, national cultural trends, or society's elite, for all of these features were a consequence of the Court's centrality.

II. THE COURT AS RITUAL

Another comprehensive approach to the Court involves an emphasis of the institution's regularized character. As the central institution of early modern England, the Royal Court was the centre "of the order of symbols, of values and beliefs, which govern[ed] the society"¹. One of the ways in which these values and beliefs were expressed was through courtly rituals and systematized methods of behavior. Although the Court was in a constant state of flux, the ritualistic aspects of the institution regulated courtly processes, and acted as standards for acting, and for interpreting conduct. Rituals at the Royal Court were symbolic of political or ideological processes, and were thus utilized for personal agendas, or as a means of self-expression. However, though individual courtiers could interpret these rituals to their own purposes, they were still limited by institutional courtly standards. The works of Norbert Elias and Erving Goffman address the nature and function of ritualistic behaviour, and the symbolic implications of its employment. These approaches to ritual inform the study of the early modern Court by suggesting that the institution was a composite of highly regularized functions involved in coexisting political and symbolic processes.

The ritualized functions of the Court created common standards throughout the institution and gave courtiers exclusive terms for understanding each other's behaviour. These terms of understanding distinguished the Court from the rest of society, and contributed to the "sacred" status of the institution: the sacred courtly rituals created a "negative cult" to prevent outsiders to the Court from directly identifying with those members of the institution. Durkheim asserts that in order to

¹ Shils, p.3.

maintain the separation between the sacred and the profane, a set of rites function as negative acts to provide a discontinuity between sacred and profane beings.² These negative acts "do not instruct the faithful to engage in acts of homage but are restricted to prohibiting certain ways of acting."³ Consequently, courtiers performing these negative acts did not necessarily recognize their actions as reflecting their affirmation of the courtly institution, but understood that these actions separated them from the rest of society. The nature of these negative rituals can be further explored through the sociological models of Erving Goffman. In *Interaction Ritual*, Goffman describes social interaction as a series of "face-saving actions" that are exclusive to a social circle: every member in the social circle is expected to have some knowledge of face-work and some experience in its use.⁴ This experience includes an awareness 'of the interpretations that others may have placed upon [one's] acts and the interpretations that [one] ought perhaps to place upon theirs.'⁵ Goffman's representation of interaction suggests that one of the commonalities shared by members of a social circle is a collective conception of the significance of specific demeanors. Those present at Court therefore understood how to act in front of one another, and how to interpret each other's actions. Moreover, by taking part in such standardized behaviours, a courtier expressed his belief in the communal rules of the Court, and displayed his "existential bond to society."⁶ An individual acting according to courtly standards of behaviour identified himself as a member of the Court, and a component of society's central zone. Thus, by practicing exclusive courtly rituals, courtiers both affirmed their own positions in society, and cemented the position of the Court in early modern England. Courtly ritual ensured that the Royal Court was a continuing process through negative acts that distinguished it from the rest of the nation.

In the courtly environment these negative acts were expressed through demeanor. Goffman claims that the "face-saving actions" that comprise social

² Durkheim, p. 221.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ Goffman, *Interaction Ritual*, p.13.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Ibid.*

interaction become habitual and standardized practices that "are like traditional plays in a game or traditional steps in a dance."⁷ Norbert Elias supports this view of a common understanding of demeanor, and argues that this was especially important in the setting of the Royal Court. Elias states that courtiers developed "an extraordinarily sensitive feeling for the status and importance that should be attributed to a person in society on the basis of his bearing, speech, manner or appearance."⁸ Because of this heightened awareness for etiquette, courtiers relied on "a constant, precisely calculated adjustment of behaviour towards everyone at court."⁹ This attention to behaviour was significant to the individual courtier, for etiquette embodied "his prestige and his relative power position [as] confirmed by others."¹⁰ Elias' description of the courtly setting suggests that the environment was one involved with presentation and deciphering, and that every courtly action was deliberate and influential. Courtiers were not only aware of the pragmatic implications of their actions, but were also involved in interpreting these actions according to their parity with, or disparity from, their ritualized significations. Scholarship on the early modern English Court confirms Elias' proposition: Adamson describes the courtier's existence as "semiotic", for he "deal[t] daily with coded and symbolic meanings."¹¹ This semiotic existence was a function of the collective nature of court ritual, as court ritual entailed "groups of courtiers performing precisely assigned functions, often imbued with strong historical or customary associations."¹² The English Court can thus be characterized as a setting where courtiers were especially aware of behaviour and demeanor. Therefore, the ritualized behaviours that structured the Court provided courtiers with a standard to interpret action, and a means of self-expression.

The significance of demeanor at the early modern Court implies that it was integral to courtly functions and should not be regarded as extraneous to the

⁷ Goffman, *Interaction Ritual*, p.13.

⁸ Elias, p. 55.

⁹ Elias, p.91.

¹⁰ Elias, p.101.

¹¹ Adamson, p.27.

¹² *Ibid.*

institution's main political and cultural processes. Goffman claims that rules of conduct are guides for actions, and differentiates between two types of rules: the substantive rule and the ceremonial rule. A substantive rule guides conduct in matters "felt to have significance in their own right, apart from what the infractions or maintenance of the rule expresses about the selves of the persons involved."¹³ In contrast, a ceremonial rule of conduct is involved in matters "felt to have secondary or even no significance in their own right, having their preliminary importance as a conventionalized means of communication by which the individual expresses his character or conveys his appreciation of the other participants in the situation."¹⁴ The nature of courtly behaviour suggests that the Court embodied the realm of the ceremonial: actions of courtiers often had little direct significance in their own right, and courtiers believed in their ability to express their individuality. Levy Peck claims that Northampton's political career entailed that he invent himself in his writings to Elizabeth and James. Northampton compared himself to St. Jerome, and thereby betokened an image "of study, contemplation, and wisdom."¹⁵ While Northampton's invocation of the image of St. Jerome had no direct political significance, it allowed the courtier to create a representation of himself based on a common understanding of Renaissance symbolism. Elias argues that a study of the ancien regime Court necessitates a study of these ceremonial aspects, as the Court people were especially sensitive to demeanor, and experienced "many things that we would be inclined to dismiss as trivial or superficial with an intensity that we have largely lost."¹⁶ Ceremonial behaviour was therefore important to those in the courtly environment, and cannot be regarded as merely secondary to political functions. An examination of courtly ceremonial behaviour is significant because this behaviour functioned as a code for those at Court to execute self-presentation, and to understand and interpret the expressions of other courtiers.

¹³ Goffman, *Interaction Ritual*, p.53.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ Linda Levy Peck, "The Mentality of a Jacobean Grandee," in *The Mental World of the Jacobean Court*, ed. Linda Levy Peck (Cambridge, 1991), p.166.

¹⁶ Elias, p.56.

Since ceremonial behaviour acted as a courtly code of conduct, the practice of this code was involved with deference at the Court. Goffman claims that in the process of ceremonial behaviour, "the individual acts with proper demeanor while in contact with others and is treated by others with deference."¹⁷ The bestowal of deference was possible because the Court was a suitable environment for the exchange of ritualized behaviour: Goffman states that deference and demeanor practices "must be institutionalized so that the individual will be able to project a viable, sacred self and stay in the game on a proper ritual basis."¹⁸ Shils' view of deference supports Goffman's belief that a suitable environment was necessary for meaningful exchanges of demeanor. Shils asserts that while deference exists at all levels of society, there are institutions that confirm or confer deference, and that these deference institutions are most important "in societies in which there is a sharp distinction between center and periphery."¹⁹ Furthermore, these deference institutions were "especially important at or near the center of society."²⁰ As the Court can be interpreted as the central deference institution in early modern England, it can also be considered a site where behaviour was associated with status and reputation. The correlation between demeanor and deference suggests that ritualized codes of conduct did not merely create a mode of acceptable courtly behaviour, but moreover represented and influenced an individual courtier's standing at Court. A courtier followed ritualized conduct in order to convey his respect for others at Court, and wished to be treated with reciprocal deference. The degree to which a courtier was enmeshed in this courtly system of standardized behaviour contributed to his position in the institution. Therefore courtiers perpetuated courtly standards of behaviour, as these standards were necessary to establish their relationships to other courtiers, and their positions within the Court.

Evidence for contemporary perceptions of courtly behaviour exists in Baldassare Castiglione's *The Book of the Courtier*, a work translated into English by Sir Thomas Hoby in 1561. Castiglione's work displays both the manner in which a

¹⁷ Goffman, *Interaction Ritual*, p.91.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ Shils, p.297.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

courtier conducted himself, and the existence of a general code of courtly behaviour. In this work, Castiglione describes the behaviour of an ideal courtier as that in which every action, gesture, habit, and every movement is accompanied with grace.²¹ This appearance of grace is dependent on the courtier's ability to mask his awareness of behavioural standards, for Castiglione describes "true art" as that "which does not appear to be art".²² The courtier must not give anything "greater care than to conceal [his] art, for if it is discovered, it quite destroys...credit and brings [him] into small esteem."²³ Castiglione's description of the ideal courtier suggests that in addition to following courtly standards of behaviour, a courtier's success also involved his capacity to make his behaviour seem effortless and natural. Although the courtier was expected to exhibit an attitude of effortlessness, or *sprezzatura*, he was nevertheless always conscious of his methods and the implications of self-representation. The courtier must "consider well what thing it is that he is doing or saying, the place where he is doing it, in whose presence, the cause that impels him, his age, his profession, the object he has in view, and the means that may conduce thereto."²⁴ The courtier's sensitivity to the significations of his actions implies that a system of acceptable behaviours existed at Court, and that members of the courtly institution were concerned with following these behaviours. Castiglione's prescriptions for the ideal courtier are therefore indicative not merely of the effortless manner of courtly behaviour, but also of the existence of a standardized code of conduct. While a courtier's behaviour might appear to be a direct expression of his natural intentions, the expectation for the courtier to veil the deliberate nature of his actions entails that seemingly natural or spontaneous behaviour was nonetheless tempered by institutional standards.²⁵ Thus, an individual courtier's actions would

²¹ Baldassare Castiglione, *The Book of the Courtier* (New York, 2003), p.32.

²² Castiglione, p.35.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ Castiglione, p.81.

²⁵ In *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, Erving Goffman states that during social interaction, a performers "tend to foster the impression that their current performance of their routine and their relationship to their current audience have something special and unique about them," and that the "routine character of the performance is obscured." Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, p.49.

have impacted the overall dynamics of the Court, but would have been simultaneously regulated by the expectations of the courtly establishment.

Although the courtier's actions might have been somewhat restricted by courtly codes of conduct, these codes also served to increase a courtier's opportunity for self-expression. Goffman claims that rules of conduct function by transforming "both actions and inaction into expression."²⁶ Since courtly behaviour was a ritualized phenomenon, courtiers shared an understanding of the implications of certain behaviours, and consequently courtiers could have employed these behaviours to elicit established implications. According to Goffman, one who possesses the proper "sign-equipment" can use these tools "to embellish and illumine one's daily performances with a favourable social style."²⁷ Courtly behaviour was therefore ritualized not only in terms of standardized behaviour, but also in terms of its employment and reception. An anonymous commentator of the Court claimed that "the courtier knoweth the secrets of the Court, judgeth them not, but useth them for this particular advantage. He is a great dissembler, for he that knoweth not how to put on that vizard is not fit to live in the courts of the princes."²⁸ Courtly codes of conduct were therefore politicized entities that possessed ritualized symbolisms: individual courtiers did not question the nature of these codes, but used their established significations to express themselves at Court. Yet courtly codes of conduct were politicized not only with respect to their representative nature, but also in terms of their employment for deceit. Francis Beaumont describes courtiers as men "that can bare a fained show", who "strike when [they] wink, and then lament the blow."²⁹ In this description, the courtier's playful wink assuages his offensive intentions, and obscures his harmful actions with courtly politesse. The courtier is able to attempt personal acts of advancement while still following ritualized standards of behaviour. Thus, even though social performances at Court were fostered by

²⁶ Goffman, *Interaction Ritual*, p.51.

²⁷ Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, p.36.

²⁸ Smuts, *Court Culture and the Origins of a Royalist Tradition in Early Stuart England*, p.76.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

abundant and diverse purposes, the form and deployment of these performances were nevertheless contained within a framework of acceptable conduct.

Episodes at the Jacobean Court reveal that codes of conduct were not merely useful, but also necessary, modes for courtly interaction. Those who sought favour at the Court were anxious to impress the recipients of their suits with proper displays of deference. In a letter written by Sir Henry Wotton from Venice in 1603, Wotton offers his services to Robert Cecil, claiming that he tumbles himself "up and down, strengthening and weakening the obligations of a servant."³⁰ Wotton is willing to inconvenience himself and perform the acts required to ensure that Cecil views him approvingly. These acts of deference might seem merely ceremonial, as Wotton describes himself as tumbling "up and down" even though he is a man "free by birth"³¹; however, these acts symbolize Wotton's willing commitment to his potential court broker. This letter therefore shows that Wotton is aware of the expected mode of behaviour for those seeking to secure a courtly patron. Wotton exhibits similar defential behaviour in a letter written to James I in September 1606. In this letter, Wotton describes himself as the Majesty's "most loyal and humble vassal," and is happy to "prostrate [himself] at [James's] royal feet."³² Both of these letters reveal Wotton's attempts to show humility towards those with whom he wishes to ingratiate himself. Although this humility might seem extraneous to Wotton's direct discourse with Cecil and James, it is a representation of the necessary mode of conduct in the courtly realm.

Evidence for the importance of following established codes of conduct exists not only in situations reflecting an affirmation of these codes, but also in circumstances involving a breach with acceptable standards of behaviour. A courtier's failure to follow codes of conduct could have negative effects on his reputation, status, or even foster political repercussions for the courtly institution. It was therefore desirable for the courtier to be aware of courtly standards of behaviour

³⁰ Sir Henry Wotton to Sir Robert Cecil, Venice, 23 May 1603, in *The Life and Letters of Sir Henry Wotton*, ed. Logan Pearsall Smith, vol. I (Oxford, 1966), p.317.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² Sir Henry Wotton to James I, Venice, 1 September 1606, in *The Life and Letters of Sir Henry Wotton*, ed. Logan Pearsall Smith, vol. I (Oxford, 1966), p.360.

and to adhere to these standards as often as possible. A letter from Sir Henry Wotton to Sir Edmund Bacon commenting on the affairs at Court reveals the effects of not following appropriate standards of behaviour on the reputation of the courtier. In this correspondence, Wotton discusses Robert Carr's failure to visit his friend Thomas Overbury while the latter was in the Tower. Wotton explains that since Overbury was in the Tower, the King has been to visit him twice, but that the "Lord Rochester, partly by some relapse into his late infirmity, and partly (as it is interpreted) through the grief of his mind, [has]...not gone with the King."³³ Carr's failure to visit Overbury has been interpreted by some as detrimental to Carr's reputation, as "disassiduity in a favourite is a degree of declination."³⁴ Wotton, on the other hand, claims that "there is no appearance" of this declination, and that he has only "set it down to show [Bacon] the hasty logic of courtiers."³⁵ While it is difficult to determine whether Carr's failure to visit Overbury did in fact affect his status at Court, it is apparent that this act affected his reputation with some courtiers. Those that felt Carr's careless actions did represent his declination were aware of the significance of acting in a deliberate manner. Rochester's decision not to act according to expected standards affects the manner in which he is perceived at Court. Wotton's letter thus shows that courtly rituals could be directly connected to an individual courtier's reputation at the early modern Court.

Courtly codes of conduct could influence a courtier's status as well as his reputation. Although Carr's failure to follow expected standards of behaviour can only be determined as influential to his reputation, other situations illustrate a connection between conduct and status. A letter from James I to Carr suggests that Carr's behaviour towards the King will have an impact on his status at Court. The King states that he has been "needlessly troubled this day with [Carr's] desperate letters", and that he "may take the right way if [he] list[s] and neither grieve[s]" the

³³ Sir Henry Wotton to Sir Edmund Bacon, London, 29 April 1613, in *The Life and Letters of Sir Henry Wotton*, ed. Logan Pearsall Smith, vol. II (Oxford, 1966), p.22.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ *Ibid.*

King nor himself.³⁶ James claims that if Carr will show his former affection for the King, "no man or woman's credit [will be] able to cross [Carr] at [the King's] hands."³⁷ If Carr is to do "but half of [his] duty unto [the King], [he] may be with [the King] in the old manner only by expressing that love to [the King's] person and respect to [Carr's] master that God and man craves of [Carr], with a hearty and feeling penitence of [Carr's] bypast errors."³⁸ This letter shows that Carr can positively affect his standing with the King if he is willing to follow the King's expectations for his behaviour. Though the King is aware of Carr's "bypast errors", he is willing to overlook their implications if Carr is to display "penitence" through his future conduct. The implication of James' expectations for his favourite is that if Carr refuses to abide by expected modes of behaviour, he will not be fulfilling his role as a courtier, and this refusal will consequently affect his status. The King's comments to Carr thus illustrate an intimate connection between courtly codes of conduct and a courtier's status at Court.

Courtly codes of conduct could affect not only an individual courtier's reputation or status, but they could also influence courtly politics. A situation between Cecil and the King in 1610 displays the role of conduct codes in maintaining effective political processes. In the summer of 1610 a draft upon the Treasury reached Cecil ordering the Treasurer to issue ten thousand pounds to a courtier. Cecil was apprehensive about the value of the sum, and suspected that the King did not realize the size of the draft. The Secretary consequently had the coins brought to the palace and stacked where the King would encounter them. The King asked who the money belonged to, and Cecil explained that it was the King's money, but that he had issued it to someone else. The King claimed that he had been deceived, and removed merely a few hundred coins from the pile to give to the courtier.³⁹ Although Cecil was able to stop the King from making what the courtier believed was a poor decision, Cecil's actions were not without consequences. The king was later

³⁶ James I to Robert Carr, Earl of Somerset, June 1615, in *Letters of James VI and I*, ed. G.P.V. Akrigg (California, 1984), p.341.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ Akrigg, p.91.

displeased: he believed that he had not been treated with sufficient respect, and feared the story "would go the rounds and he would appear ridiculous."⁴⁰ James I's displeasure with Cecil shows that the Secretary's lack of respect for the King's orders was recognized as a breach of appropriate conduct, and that Cecil's intervention had hindered the effective execution of the royal prerogative. Cecil's act therefore shows the interrelation between conduct and politics at the Court, and that one of the functions of ritualized courtly behaviour was to ensure that certain political initiatives were sustained.

Evidence from the Jacobean Court thus reveals that the institution was highly regularized, and was not merely a function of random people and events. The ritualized nature of the Court implies that courtiers' seemingly senseless actions were in fact accepted modes of conduct within the courtly institution. It is therefore ineffective to judge courtiers' actions according to moral or preconceived standards without considering the context and function of these actions. Although a courtier might be motivated by personal agendas, his actions must not be interpreted as direct translations of his nature or character. Rather, an early modern courtier's actions would be both tempered by, and hence reflective of, courtly codes of conduct. A courtier not only desired to follow these established rituals because it confirmed his membership in the Court, but was also required to abide by certain codes in order to facilitate the reception of his exploits. The courtier's obligation to employ courtly codes of conduct suggests that attention should be given to the functions and effects, instead of the ethical characteristics, of the courtier's actions. For if the courtier's actions were ritualized, then his actions are not merely representative of the individual courtier, but also of the institution as a whole. Individual acts at Court are invaluable reflections of the irreducible, or sacred, fundamentals of the Jacobean Court. For instance, expectations of deference illustrate the value placed on the superiority of the King, and the structured relationships of the patronage system. A study of courtly ritual can therefore be used as a means of defining the terms of sacredness at the Court, and consequently, in the English nation as a whole. Hence, the approaches of Norbert Elias and Erving Goffman offer a fruitful means of

⁴⁰ Otto J. Scott, *James I* (New York, 1976), p.317

analyzing the Jacobean Royal Court: these approaches show that the Court was a codified and ritualized entity, operating within a structured framework of values, obligations and expectations.

The prevalence of courtly ritual implies that the Court was a function of more than an individual courtier's political or social aspirations. It is therefore insufficient to describe the Court as a product of English elites or politics, as the institution was also shaped by symbolic rituals. Thus, we must understand the Court as a composite of several simultaneous and varied influences.

III. THE COURT AS DISPLAY

The complexity of courtly processes was also a component of court culture: although Jacobean display appears to be purely cultural, it involved a number of political and social considerations. While the ritualized forms of courtly behaviour implicitly suggested the sacred values of the Jacobean Court, more overt forms of display were required to affirm the institution's sacred status with outsiders to the Court. These types of courtly display were embodied in various social and cultural forms including architecture, banquets, progresses, court chapel rituals, and courtly attire. Although as the central institution of the nation, the Court was necessarily and indisputably influential, material displays of the Court's splendour only emphasized its magnificence. Courtly displays of magnificence were therefore physical manifestations of the monarchy's glory. Yet in spite of the propagandizing function of the Court's material splendour, contemporary commentaries often criticize these displays as being ostentatious and excessive. Historiographical interpretations of the Jacobean Court often accept these contemporary perceptions as representative of the institution's nature. However, even though contemporary disapproval for courtly magnificence suggests that these displays were not always successful in their purpose, it does not indicate that the courtly institution was fundamentally decadent. The works of the anthropologists Clifford Geertz and Mary Douglas, and the works of Emile Durkheim offer support for the view that material displays of courtly magnificence had specific purposes, and that they were necessary components of an operational Court. In *How Institutions Think* Mary Douglas expounds the Durkheimian view that society is reflective of nature by claiming that institutions are also founded in nature. If the Jacobean Court is to be interpreted as a component of a

natural hierarchy, then displays of the Court's privileged position in society are contextually acceptable. Moreover, according to Durkheim, the highest-ranking entities in a society are the most specific and richest in detail, so the position of the Court necessitated a complex culture. Geertz' work *Negara: The Theatre State in Nineteenth Century Bali* further suggests that display was not only acceptable, but necessary: Geertz proposes that states favouring spectacle employ public dramatizations of the monarchy's glory in order to actively shape the court and state into a model of excellence¹. Thus, the anthropological studies of Clifford Geertz and Mary Douglas imply that courtly displays of magnificence in early modern England did not entail a corresponding corruption of the Jacobean Court.

Outsiders to the Jacobean Royal Court often perceived the ostentatious nature of the institution to be representative of its corrupt and depraved nature. S. J. Houston claims that sensational scandals damaged the Court's reputation.² Those who saw the Court from a distance were influenced by such incidents as the Essex divorce, the Overbury murder, Suffolk's trial for embezzlement, and Lady Roos' allegations that her husband was impotent.³ Gentry that were not always present at Court saw the institution as a setting where "great personages [merely] prostitut[ed] their bodies to the intent to satisfy and consume their substance of lascivious appetites of all sorts."⁴ Maurice Lee similarly characterizes the Jacobean Court as depraved and uncontrolled: the Court embodied "a kaleidoscope of drunken maids of honour, effeminate young men, and endless stream of gold showered upon these worthless people, [and] a smug absentee king relentlessly pursuing deer."⁵ These portraits of the Court suggest that contemporary commentators saw the institution as one where personal urges overcame the practice of moderation and restraint. The Jacobean Court was an immoral setting where its members could satisfy their individual ambitions rather than commit themselves to the affairs of the state.

¹ Geertz, p.13.

² Houston, p.105.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ Houston illustrates the perceived corruption of the Court with this contemporary statement of Simon D'Ewes, a Puritan diarist, *Ibid.*

⁵ Lee, p.158.

This contemporary perception of the Court as corrupt has several manifestations with regards to the political, social, and cultural nature of the institution. One of the manifestations of this perception existed in receptions to the Court's regular displays of splendour. The ostentatious nature of the Court was perceived at best as artificial, and often compared to the simple, and assumedly natural, nature of the rest of the nation. In "An Epistle Answering to One that Asked to be Sealed of the Tribe of Ben", Ben Jonson uses the metaphor of pottery to describe poetry, and compares his basic formational material of "Christmas clay" to the "animated porcelain of the court."⁶ The depiction of the Court as porcelain suggests that the Court is highly cultivated and is not a natural entity, but rather one constructed by man. The Court has been polished to such a degree that it is no longer recognizable as a product of its rough and unprocessed formational clay. Comparable portrayals of the Court also existed in literary works that did not name the Court directly, but alluded to a state of corruption among courtly institutions in general.⁷ One such work is the drama *The Malcontent* by John Marston. In *The Malcontent* the character Malevole describes the Court as "a pigeon-house that [is] smooth, round and white without, and full of holes and stink within."⁸ Marston's description of the Court implies that the exterior, or public, face of the institution has been refined so that it does not reflect the true nature of the Court. This illustration of the Court unites public display with a negative conception of artificiality: although courtly display might embody impressive and appealing forms, it does not distract the viewer from the actual state of the Court.

⁶ Ben Jonson, "An Epistle Answering to One that Asked to be Sealed of the Tribe of Ben," in *Renaissance Literature: An Anthology*, eds. Michael Payne, John Hunter (Malden, MA, 2003), p.889.

⁷ In *The Mental World of the Jacobean Court*, Malcolm Smuts discusses the depiction of fictional court intrigues in Jacobean plays. He explains that these intrigues were "readily interpreted as veiled allusions to contemporary events," and makes the compelling argument that "the important thing is not so much whether the playwrights intended to make such allusions, but the fact that the play-going public...enjoyed finding them", Malcolm Smuts, "Cultural Diversity and Cultural Change at the Court of James I", in *The Mental World of the Jacobean Court*, ed, Linda Levy Peck (Cambridge, 1991), pp.107-108.

⁸ John Marston, *The Malcontent*, ed. George K. Hunter (Manchester, 2000), I, iv, 85-86.

Marston's description of the polished, attractive exterior of the Court as differing from its inner, or general, nature suggests that the Court was perceived by contemporaries as a decaying and unattractive institution. In *The Malcontent* Marston further describes the corruption of the Court through a portrayal of the courtier as insatiable: the courtier is driven by "envious ambition [that] never sates his thirst / Till, sucking all, he swells and swells, and bursts."⁹ The image of the Court as composed of self-serving individuals is paralleled in contemporary commentaries directly associated with the Jacobean Court, as well as in the literary works of the period. An anonymous epigram describes the progress of Robert Carr's career which "at first a Page began [until] / Hee sweld, and sweld into a gentleman / And from a gentleman and bravely dight / Hee sweld, and sweld till he became a Knight." Carr "at last for[got] what he was at first [and] / Hee sweld into an Earle and then he burst."¹⁰ These perceptions of the courtier suggest that not only were those at Court concerned with merely furthering their own agendas, but that their objectives surpassed an acceptable standard of ambition. Although the Court might display a guise of glory and splendour, the inner, and fundamental, components of the Court were corrupt and decaying. A poem by Sir Walter Raleigh confirms that idea that the Court employed display merely to veil its true character, for in "The Lie" Raleigh claims that the Court "glows / And shines, like rotten wood."¹¹ The poem also implies that attempts at masking the decaying nature of the Court with display were unsuccessful, as the "rotten" character of the institution was still apparent through its artificial "glow". Contemporary perceptions of courtly display therefore suggest that the Court favoured artificiality in order to conceal its operational state of corruption.

These contemporary perceptions of courtly culture have effected a generally negative historiographical tradition of the Jacobean Court. Bryan Bevan claims that while the Elizabethan Court, particularly in the 1590s, had often been immoral, the courtiers were too much in awe of the Queen to not behave in an acceptable manner.¹²

⁹ Marston, I.iv.79-80.

¹⁰ Lindley, p.160-161.

¹¹ Sir Walter Raleigh, "The Lie," in *Renaissance Literature: An Anthology*, eds. Michael Payne, John Hunter (Malden, MA, 2003), p.485.

¹² Bevan, p.77.

On the other hand, the Jacobean period was "one of the most immoral, corrupt ages in English history," and setting a high standard at Court was "neither the inclination nor possible for James and his Queen when we consider their characters."¹³ Caroline Bingham asserts that the courtiers of the Elizabethan Court had developed "a glittering ostentation which they were reluctant to relinquish"¹⁴, and that the Jacobean period embodied an "increasing extravagance of the Court."¹⁵ Not only do these assessments of the Court make broad generalizations with respect to Jacobean and Elizabethan courtly culture, but they also imply that the ostentatious nature of the Jacobean Court was a negative quality. Although many disappointed courtiers and outsiders to the Court believed that courtly display in the Jacobean period was excessive, contemporary judgments of the Court do not represent accurate depictions of the Court in its cultural and political context.

Even though the majority of scholarship on the Jacobean Court characterizes the institution as corrupt, more recent works acknowledge that courtly display had a definite function in early modern England. John Adamson claims that the Court's material culture attested to the magnificence of the Royal Household, and that Court ritual and ceremonial expressed the "conviction that the political authority was sacred."¹⁶ According to John H. Astington, the Renaissance idea of the palace was different from its ancestor the castle, in which "the king was at the centre of a fortified camp": in contrast, the Renaissance palace was intended to be a centre "for the exercise of power largely through verbal and symbolic means."¹⁷ Both Adamson and Astington suggest that the Court's physical representation of splendour was related to the institution's political occupation. The function of courtly display was not only a symbol of the monarchy's glory, but it was also a medium through which the royal influence could be exercised. Furthermore, Levy Peck asserts that courtly display was a central and expected function of the early modern Court, as "it was axiomatic in Renaissance and Baroque Europe that kings and their courtiers must

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ Bingham p.77.

¹⁵ Bingham, p.86.

¹⁶ Adamson, p.100.

¹⁷ Astington, p. 36.

display magnificence."¹⁸ These interpretations of courtly display illustrate a common understanding of the general purpose for ceremonial, yet they do not provide a comprehensive explanation for the functions and employment of explicit expressions of magnificence. If courtly display was truly an accepted and expected form of the Court's operation, then the association of display with the nation's central institution implies that the function of ceremonial was more complex than its attribute as a tool for promoting the monarchy. The function of display therefore needs to be explored as a component of the Court's political, social, and cultural context.

The centrality of the Court in early modern England entails that courtly display was both an influential and irreducible component of society. Although contemporary commentaries on courtly display reflect disappointment with the employment of ceremonial, the position of the Court as the central institution of the nation suggests that courtly processes would have been imbued with a sacred nature. Therefore any dissatisfaction with Jacobean courtly display would have been a function of the execution of this display rather than with the use of display itself. The centrality of the Court perhaps even accounted for the existence of criticism against courtly display, for Jacobean society was exceptionally concerned with the corruption of its sacred standard and the corresponding repercussions in society. Castiglione's prescriptions for the courtier indicate that the early modern courtier might have even considered criticism of the monarchy and Court a component of his occupation: R Malcolm Smuts argues that criticism and satire were not necessarily expressions of opposition, for Castiglione outlines one of the courtier's "highest duties" as the need "to warn the prince against conduct that might harm his position through directly veiled criticism."¹⁹ This interpretation of courtly criticism implies that contemporary claims of courtly corruption through display might not signify a reified corruption of the Court, but merely concern for an eventual corruption. Thus, contemporary criticism of courtly display should not be accepted as a direct representation of the courtly state.

¹⁸ Malcolm Smuts, "Cultural Diversity and Cultural Change at the Court of James I", p.109.

¹⁹ Smuts, *Court Culture and the Origins of a Royalist Tradition in Early Stuart England*, p.82.

The sacred status of the Court would not only have contributed to concern for the preservation of certain standards, but it would have also provided an appropriate context for the employment of ceremonial. In *How Institutions Think*, the anthropologist Mary Douglas argues that institutions are founded on analogy, and that in order for an institution to acquire legitimacy, it "needs a formula that founds its rightness in reason and in nature."²⁰ Once an institution has created this formula, it becomes naturalized, and is consequently "part of the order of the universe and so [is] ready to stand as the grounds of argument."²¹ Douglas' description of institutions implicates the Court in a hierarchical system that extends beyond its position in society itself. The Court was not only at the peak of a social hierarchy, but it was also a representation of a natural hierarchy that was implicitly understood by early modern society. Since the Court represented the social, political, and natural centre of Jacobean England, displays of its magnificence were symbolic of more than the authority of the monarchy. While historians acknowledge the importance of display for the promotion of the monarchy in society, Douglas' proposals regarding legitimacy indicate that the Court and its processes existed as rational and natural entities. Therefore, the employment of display at Court would have represented a reasonable expression of the institution's understood position in the Jacobean world. The intimations of Douglas' work on institutions also serve to contextualize contemporary criticisms of the nature of courtly display. While Marston and Jonson describe the material culture of the Court as contributing to the artificiality of the institution, Douglas' proposition that institutions are analogous to nature shows that courtly display was actually associated with the natural. Though manifestations of courtly display might seem to differ from other apparent courtly qualities, these manifestations were in fact emblematic of the Court's symbolic position as the centre of England. Thus, contemporary accusations of the Court's artificiality are only representative of the physical formations of courtly display: whereas expressions of the Court's magnificence might embody artificial forms of material culture, courtly culture did not entail the artificiality of the Court itself.

²⁰ Douglas, p.45.

²¹ Douglas, p.52.

The contextual contributions of Douglas' work on institutions are complemented by Durkheim's more specific conclusions on the characteristics of entities in a hierarchy. Durkheim's conception of society influenced Shils' work on centres and peripheries, and therefore Durkheim believes that society has a standard, or central, entity from which "things are classified as sacred and profane."²² This classification comprises a system "whose parts are ranked in hierarchical order", the purpose of which is "to establish relationships of subordination and coordination."²³ Within this hierarchical system of classification, Durkheim argues that the highest-ranking are "the species that are most specific and richest in reality," while the lowest-ranking are "the most general and poorest in detail."²⁴ This description of the highest-ranking entities offers further explanation for the nature of ceremonial, as the prevalence and intricacy of courtly display was essential to illustrate the Court's embodiment of the sacred. While contemporaries might consider such festivities as those accompanying the creation of Prince Henry as the Prince of Wales excessive, Durkheim's attribution of detail to the highest-ranking entities in a society provides reasoning for the existence of such an abundance of display. In his *Annals*, John Stow describes these festivities as comprising entertainments in the tiltyard and on the water. The tiltyard was filled with "diverse earls, barons and others being in rich and glorious armor, and having costly caparisons, wondrously curiously embroidered with pearls, gold, and silver."²⁵ During the evening there were naval triumphs and "pastimes upon the water, over against the Court with ships of war, and galleys fighting, one against another, and against a great castle, builded upon the water."²⁶ After the battle there were "many strange and variable fireworks in the castle and all

²² Durkheim, p.96.

²³ Durkheim, p.114

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ John Stow, "The annals, or a generall chronicle of England, begun first by maister Iohn Stow and after him continued and augmented with matters forreyne, and domestique, auncieunt and moderne, vnto the end of this present yeere 1614," in *Early English Books Online*, ed. Alfred W. Pollard (Ann Arbor, Mass., 1999), <http://www.library.ualberta.ca/databases/databaseinfo/index.cfm?ID=3089>.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

the ships" for about an hour.²⁷ Stow's account of the festivities illustrates both his wonderment at the "strange and variable" types of ceremonial, and the elaborateness of the spectacles. The richness of the courtiers' armour, the detailed setting of the castle built upon water, and the extensive fireworks display support Durkheim's description of the highest-ranking species in a society as rich and specific. Thus, Durkheim's propositions for the nature of elements in a classification system show that not only was the existence of courtly display understandable, but that its ostentatious character was also customary of the Court's position in society.

While Douglas' and Durkheim's works have implications for the general function and nature of courtly display, the work of Clifford Geertz directly addresses the role of spectacle in the theatre state. In *Negara: The Theatre State in Nineteenth Century Bali*, Geertz interprets Negara as a theatre state because it favoured spectacle, ceremony, and "the public dramatization of [social inequity and status pride], the ruling obsessions of Balinese culture."²⁸ This theatre state involves its members in an encompassing metaphor, in which the kings and princes are the impresarios, the priests are the directors, and the peasants are the supporting cast, stage crew, and audience.²⁹ This metaphor entails that ceremony is not merely an important component of the stately function, but that its presence is emphasized: Negara was a polity in which "the interplay of status, pomp, and governance not only remain[ed] visible, but [was], in fact, blazened."³⁰ Geertz' characterization of the Balinese state suggests that in addition to representing the glory of the monarchy, ceremony was infused into state politics. Spectacle was the main purpose of the state, and court ceremonialism "was the driving force of Court politics."³¹ Although the physical manifestations of courtly display were symbolically significant, Geertz argues that ceremonialism was "but the instrument of purposes concealed beneath it or towering over it."³² This interpretation of the relationship between courtly politics and display

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ Geertz, p.13.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ Geertz, p.121.

³¹ Geertz, p.13.

³² Geertz, p.122.

implies that ceremony was more than a symbol of the monarchy's glory, as it had an influential as well as a reflective nature. The influential quality of display extended beyond the function of impressing outsiders to the Court for it served as a tool for courtiers to perform their political duties. Geertz's assertion of the association between spectacle and politics suggests that courtiers were obligated to follow ritualized forms of courtly display. Even those courtiers who were not naturally inclined towards ostentation were required to abide by courtly expectations. In 1603 Cecil entertained the King at Theobalds, but was not able to furnish his house "of all such necessarys as are convenient for his Majesty's reception" alone.³³ Cecil was therefore forced to invest in "the helpe of [his] friends" and borrowed "sylver dishes and such other gilt plate".³⁴ This request of gilded plates illustrates the courtier's obligation to serve the Court in an impressive fashion. Thus, even though contemporaries criticized courtly display, the importance of ceremonial to courtly politics required courtiers to employ, and consequently to perpetuate, forms of display at the Jacobean Court.

As well as suggesting that ceremonialism entered into politics on a local level through courtly ritual, Geertz's work also posits that ceremonialism had the function of shaping the entire state. Geertz defines the Court as the exemplary centre of a nation in which the court-and-capital is "at once a microcosm of the supernatural order and the material embodiment of political order."³⁵ The Court is not just "the nucleus, engine, or the pivot of the state," it "is the state."³⁶ Therefore, through "the mere act of providing a model, a paragon, a faultless image of civilized existence, the Court shapes the world around it into at least a rough approximation of its own excellence."³⁷ Hence, by providing a representation of an ideal existence, the Court had the ability to directly guide the rest of the nation towards its own glorious

³³ Robert Cecil to the Lord Keeper of the Great Seale of England, Whitehall, 27 April 1603, in *The Egerton Papers: A Collection of Public and Private Documents Chiefly Illustrative of the Times of Elizabeth and James I*, ed. J. Payne Collier (London, 1840), p.369.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ Geertz, p.13.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ *Ibid.*

existence. Geertz' doctrine of the exemplary centre indicates that courtly display was an active as well as a representative or instrumental entity: not only did it symbolize the magnificence of the Court and serve as a tool for individual courtiers to effect political agendas, but as a microcosm of the supernatural order it also molded society towards this image merely through its existence. Ben Jonson insinuates this active courtly function in the masque *Love Freed from Ignorance and Folly*. Jonson describes Britain as a world in which "the King's the Eye," or the exemplary centre, as "the Sun [is] the Eye of this great All."³⁸ As the "eye" of the world, the King "is the Light and Treasure too; / For 'tis his Wisdom all doth do. Which still is fixed in his brest, Yet still doth move to guide the rest."³⁹ Jonson describes the King, or centre, as possessing privileged insight that he uses both to guide his own conduct, and to direct the rest of the nation in his example. This description of the King's function depicts the centre of society as exemplary in that it is able to influence through a model of excellence. The King's position in Jonson's masque corresponds to Geertz' explanation of the Court's function, as Geertz argues that "the life of the Court is paradigmatic, not merely reflective, of social order".⁴⁰ Geertz' theory of the exemplary centre therefore suggests that courtly display was one of the means through which the Court could actively influence the rest of the nation. Thus, while the ostentatious nature of courtly display might have seemed immoral and excessive to contemporaries, Geertz' interpretation of the Balinese state indicates that in states that favour spectacle, the Court's use of ceremonial serves to mold society into a likeness of its excellence.

The works of Mary Douglas, Erving Goffman and Clifford Geertz contextualize the practice of courtly display, and consequently illustrate that ceremonial was an acceptable, expected, and even necessary component of the Court's operation. Although contemporary commentaries on ceremonial often characterize it as decadent and excessive, our interpretation of the Jacobean Court should not adopt these opinions without an analysis of the character and function of

³⁸ Ben Jonson, "Love Freed From Ignorance and Folly", in *A Book of Masques*, ed. Norman Sanders (Cambridge, 1967), p.86.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ Geertz, p.13.

display. As the central institution of early modern England, the Court was considered sacred, and therefore courtly display would have been considered acceptable, as the Court was the metaphoric apex of a natural hierarchy. Furthermore, the central position of the Court entailed that the institution was comprised of the values and beliefs that society considered to be sacred; hence, courtly displays would have functioned as symbols that confirmed these values to the nation. While these courtly expressions of the society's sacred values have often been interpreted as excessive, the Court's status as one of the highest-ranking entities in the social hierarchy demanded that the institution appear rich and detailed. In addition to representing the glory of the Court and the central values of society, courtly display also served an instrumental purpose, for courtiers were expected to employ forms of ceremonial in their interactions. Moreover, courtly display functioned as an instrument in society independent of its employment by courtiers: by aiding the Court in composing an idealized image of existence, ceremonial shaped society into an estimation of the Court's magnificence. Thus, these approaches to courtly display illustrate that ceremonial was not merely a decadent and excessive component of Jacobean courtly practice.

The function of courtly display illustrates the enmeshment of cultural, political, and social processes at the Royal Court. Display served to maintain the Court's position and occupation in society, and was therefore more than a cultural component of the institution. Thus, an accurate conception of the Jacobean Court includes a simultaneous recognition of all its attributes.

IV. THE COURT AS PERFORMANCE

The consideration of simultaneous courtly processes is also significant to the study of performative behaviour. The function of display at the Jacobean Royal Court entailed social as well as cultural representations of courtly values. Cultural forms of courtly display generally involved public exhibitions of the Court's magnificence, and social terms of display consisted of courtly conduct, manners, and interaction. Since courtiers were required to follow ritualized codes of conduct, the employment and manipulation of these codes was a prominent feature of the courtly community. While outsiders to the Court might not have understood courtly behaviour as a feature of display, members of the institution would have been aware of the dramaturgical character of conduct. Contemporary commentaries on courtly behaviour reflect this performative aspect of behaviour, for the courtier is often characterized as artificial, affected, and inconstant. As contemporary accounts have influenced the historiography of cultural forms of courtly display, this negative characterization of the courtier has also affected interpretations of the early modern courtier. Yet if courtly conduct is to be construed as a ritualized function, then the apparent nature of the early modern courtier cannot be accepted a direct expression of an individual courtier's complex character. Rather, the modes of behaviour exhibited at the Court can only be reflective of institutional values and standards. The obligation for courtiers to employ specific modes of demeanor and to participate in certain activities therefore implies that contemporary perceptions of the courtier were not indicative of his corruption, but of expectations for courtly performances. The works of Erving Goffman, Anna Bryson, and Norbert Elias support the interpretation of the early modern Court as a performative institution. These authors address the dramaturgical

quality of human behaviour: they discuss the importance of the appearance and manner of conduct, the symbolic and political significations of ritualized actions, and the ability of individuals to manipulate such conduct codes for their personal agendas. These aspects of performative behaviour often demand that the individual suppress his personal desires, and even maintain behaviour of which he does not approve. However, these infringements on an individual's liberty are usually upheld, for committing to a code of interaction incorporates the individual in a community. Members of the courtly community therefore operated within an exclusive framework of conduct that embodied social, political, and cultural connotations. Thus, the models for performative behaviour outlined in the social science literature imply that courtly behaviour was a form of performative display, and that the courtier's simultaneous consideration of political, cultural, and social concerns indicates that the Court cannot be analyzed by one of these elements in isolation.

Both Norbert Elias and Anna Bryson argue that manners were a significant component of early modern society. In *From Courtesy to Civility: Changing Codes of Conduct in Early Modern England*, Bryson depicts the past as "another country" with unfamiliar styles and "rules of social behaviour."¹ Bryson defines these styles and behaviour as society's code of manners: this code includes dress, bodily demeanor and gesture, standards of modesty and decency, and the rules of everyday social encounter and exchange.² Although past codes of manners have been transmitted through contemporary literary works and entertainments, the historian has not been "required to understand a dramatic reconstruction of the past."³ Bryson posits that modern historians view manners as mere "form", and consequently as a topic of secondary importance.⁴ However, manners should not be interpreted as inconsequential, for sixteenth and seventeenth century England embodied the motto "manners maketh man", and courtesy and civility were "among the values central to Tudor and Stuart assumptions and fears about the social and political order."⁵ Elias

¹ Bryson, p.1.

² *Ibid.*

³ Bryson, p.2.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ Bryson, p.3.

supports Bryson's belief in the primacy of manners in early modern society, and claims that this primacy was heightened at the Royal Court. The significance of court etiquette entails that manners can provide "an extremely sensitive and reliable instrument for measuring the prestige value of an individual within the social network."⁶ The study of manners at the early modern Court can therefore illuminate general courtly values as well as reveal the position and status of an individual courtier within the institution. The works of Bryson and Elias suggest that manners should not only be addressed as primary concerns, but also that an understanding of courtly etiquette can inform our perception of the Court and its processes. Hence, by analyzing forms of courtly behaviour and interaction, we can achieve a better understanding of the Court as a system of structured, yet dynamic, processes.

Historiographical perceptions of courtly social processes are similar to interpretations of public courtly ceremonial. These perceptions of courtly behaviour are supported by contemporary criticisms of the courtier: contemporary literature characterizes the courtier as corrupt, immoral, self-serving, dishonest, insatiable, and fickle. The episode that is most often used by historians to illustrate the immorality of courtly behaviour is the four-day entertainment for King Christian of Denmark in 1606. Sir John Harington claimed that from the arrival of King Christian in England, he had been "overwhelmed with carousal and sports of all kinds."⁷ Men whom one normally "never could get to taste good liquor, now follow[ed] the fashion, and wallow[ed] in beastly delights."⁸ The ladies at Court exhibited similar behaviour, for they "abandon[ed] their sobriety, and [were] seen to roll about in intoxication."⁹ The Court was so greatly under the influence of alcohol, that on an evening of a masque representing Solomon and the coming of the Queen of Sheba, the lady playing the Queen's part carried gifts to King Christian, but "forgetting the steppes arising to the canopy, overset her caskets into his Danish Majesties lap, and fell at his feet."¹⁰ King Christian then "got up and would dance with the Queen of Sheba; but he fell down

⁶ Elias, p.8.

⁷ Akrigg, p.80.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

and humbled himself before her, and was carried to an inner chamber and laid on a bed of state; which was not a little defiled with the presents of the queen which had been bestowed on his garments."¹¹ The entertainment continued with the appearance of Faith, Hope and Charity, who were unable to perform their roles properly, and had to withdraw from the room to the lower hall where they were found "sick and spewing,"¹² Many historians have construed this incident as representing the main condition of the Jacobean Court, and the implications of this immoral event have tempered evaluations of the Jacobean courtier in general.¹³

The corruption of the Jacobean courtier has several manifestations in contemporary literature. One of the most common characteristics attributed to the courtier was the possession of an egocentric perspective. In "The First Anniversary: An Anatomy of the World", John Donne provides a satirical representation of an ideal state. This state would be "gilded...So that some princes have some temperance [and], / Some counsellors some purpose to advance / the common profit."¹⁴ Sir Henry Wotton depicts the courtier similarly, as he declares that he has been "tied about [his] own business, which [he has] told...like a true courtier; for right courtiers indeed have no other business but themselves."¹⁵ These portrayals of the Jacobean courtier illustrate that many contemporaries viewed the courtier as a self-serving individual who felt no obligation to consider the needs of others. As well as being a selfish creature, the courtier was also perceived as insatiable. The courtier was implicitly understood to have lost his scruples, and his ability to employ reason in his actions. In *The Revenger's Tragedy* by Cyril Tourneur, the character Antonio

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ William McElwee states that the Jacobean Court exhibited a "falling-off in manners and taste for which James must personally be held largely responsible." James "allowed the most ceremonial occasions to become drunken and disorderly orgies", and court banquets became "indecent scramble[s] for free food and drink which quickly generated into a debauch," McElwee, p.174.

¹⁴ John Donne, "The First Anniversary: An Anatomy of the World; Wherein, by Occasion of the Untimely Death of Mistress Elizabeth Drury, the Frailty and the Decay of this Whole World is Represented", in *Renaissance Literature: An Anthology*, eds. Michael Payne and John Hunter (Malden, MA, 2003), p.941.

¹⁵ Sir Henry Wotton to Sir Edmund Bacon, Greenwich, 27 May 1611, in *The Life and Letters of Sir Henry Wotton*, ed. Logan Pearsall Smith, vol. I (Oxford, 1966), p.507.

describes the violent seduction of his wife at Court. During a court masque the duchess' youngest son has a "long lust to eat / Into [Antonio's] wearing, [and] amongst all the ladies / Single[s] out [his wife]."¹⁶ Then, "in the height of all the revels, when the music [is] heard loudest, courtiers busiest, / And ladies great with laughter...with a face more impudent than his vizard, / [the duchess' son] harrie[s] her amidst a throng of panders / That live upon damnation of both kinds, / And fe[eds] the ravenous vulture of his lust."¹⁷ The courtier's lack of scruples also extends to his willingness to privilege self-advancement over friendship. In a letter from John Holles to the Countess of Hartford, Holles declares that "Court uses [are often] preferred before long tried frendship."¹⁸ Contemporary perceptions of the courtier therefore posit him as a selfish and imprudent individual who is not able to recognize either the importance of social relationships or the potential consequences of his behaviour.

Contemporary portrayals of the courtier suggest not only that his fundamental character was corrupt, but also that his social mannerisms were artificial and dishonest. Sir John Harington believed that in order to thrive at Court, a man "muste put halfe his honestie under his bonnet; and [that] manie...never parte [with] that commoditie at all, and sleepe wyth it all in a bag."¹⁹ Ben Jonson also felt that one of the courtier's defining characteristics was his dishonesty, but Jonson implies that even this insincerity was often performed with a degree of artificiality. In the poem "To Censorious Courtling" Jonson claims that he would rather have a courtier "utterly / Dispraise [his] work than praise it frostily: [for] when [he is] read [the courtier] feign'st a weak applause, / As if [he] [art] [his] friend, but lack'st a cause."²⁰ This description of the courtier emphasizes his insincerity, for the "feigned" responses of

¹⁶ Cyril Tourneur, "The Revenger's Tragedy," *The Anchor Anthology of Jacobean Drama*, ed. Richard C. Harrier, vol. II (New York, 1963), I.iv.32-34.

¹⁷ Tourneur, I.iv.37-44.

¹⁸ John Holles to the Countess of Hartford, 15 July 1616, in *Letters of John Holles*, ed. P. R. Seddon, vol. I (Nottingham, 1975), p.133.

¹⁹ Sir John Harington to Dr. John Still, Bishop of Bath and Wells, Bath or Kelston, October 1603, in *The Letters and Epigrams of Sir John Harington, together with The Prayse of Private Life*, ed. Norman Egbert McClure (Philadelphia, 1930), p.109.

²⁰ Ben Jonson, "To Censorious Courtling," in *Renaissance Literature: An Anthology*, eds. Michael Payne and John Hunter (Malden, MA, 2003), p.869.

the courtier in Jonson's poem show that his executed actions deviate from his desired behaviour. While this artificiality demonstrates a disregard for a consistency between impulse and action, contemporary commentaries suggest that courtiers also exhibited inconsistency from one action to another. Sir Thomas Overbury describes the courtier as a man who "follows nothing but inconstancie,"²¹ and Sir John Holles characterizes court friendship as "a cable that in storms is ever cut."²² These commentaries on the courtier show that contemporaries could not discern basic courtly values from patterns of courtly behaviour. The behaviour of those at Court appeared to be a series of selfish acts that varied in nature according to the motivations of individual courtiers. Contemporary commentaries on courtly behaviour therefore posit the courtier as a false and inconsistent individual who acts on his personal impulses rather than from a consideration of their implications and consequences.

This negative portrayal of courtly behaviour is not entirely indicative of the positions and roles embodied by the Jacobean courtier. While individual courtiers could have been selfish and inconsistent at times, actions that seemingly exhibit these qualities should not be interpreted as direct representations of these values. Furthermore, these actions should not be construed as symbolic of courtly behaviour in general. Perhaps the only contemporary accusation that was essentially accurate was that of artificiality. Courtly behaviour can be considered artificial because courtiers were performers in that they were obligated to follow acceptable forms of interaction. In a study of Northampton's career, Levy Peck claims that Northampton was always playing a role, because "Renaissance culture emphasized the metaphors of theatre and of role playing."²³ The importance of theatre to the Jacobean Court was evident in the prominence of the court masque. The purpose of the masque was not to merely entertain, but also to serve as a means for courtiers to engage in standardized forms of behaviour. Stephen Orgel asserts that the dramas at Court

²¹ Sir Thomas Overbury, "The Courtier," in *The Overburian Characters: To which is added A Wife*, ed. W. J. Paylor (Oxford, 1936), p.7.

²² Somerset, p.32.

²³ Levy Peck, *Northampton*, p.6.

"were expressions of the age's most profound assumptions about the monarchy."²⁴ These dramas included "strong elements of ritual and communion", so "to participate in such a production involved far more than simply watching a play."²⁵ In fact, appearing in a masque was not just playing a part, "it was precisely the opposite", for "what the noble spectator watched he ultimately became".²⁶ The role of the courtier in the masque was therefore symbolic of his role at the Court: the courtier participated in the court masque because it represented his support of the monarchy and emphasized his privileged membership in a metaphorical hierarchy. The courtier's performative role at Court therefore signified his connection to the sacred institution. Thus, contemporary perceptions of the courtier as false are generally accurate; however, the courtier was false not because he valued dishonesty, but rather because his position at Court necessitated a performative expression of his courtly standing.

The performative role of the courtier entailed a heightened sensitivity to the appearance and manner of all action at Court. Goffman defines a performance as "the way in which the individual in ordinary work situations presents himself and his activity to others, the ways in which he guides and controls the impressions they form, and the kinds of things he may and may not do while sustaining his performance before them."²⁷ This definition of social performances suggests that despite contemporary accusations of selfishness and impulsiveness, the courtier was very aware of the modes and consequences of his actions. Not only was the courtier aware of the implications of his actions, but he was also especially concerned about their reception, for "upper mobility involv[ed] the presentation of proper performances".²⁸ Since one of the courtier's main objectives was to secure his position at Court, he would have been anxious to execute as many proper performances as possible, and was therefore aware of the acceptable modes of courtly performances, and strived to follow these models to the best of his ability. The contemporary belief that courtiers were immoral because of their participation in

²⁴ Orgel, p.8.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ Orgel, p.38.

²⁷ Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, xi.

²⁸ Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, p.36.

lavish entertainments and their false behaviour is consequently an insufficient assessment of courtly behaviour. Courtiers were concerned with achieving proper courtly performances, and thus were attentive to the appearance of their actions in order that they not appear inadequate to other members of the Court. The courtier's desire to effect a proper performance is apparent in Sir Francis Bacon's actions when he was presenting a masque for the marriage of the King's favourite, Somerset. Bacon refused to accept financial support from Solicitor-General Yelverton because he knew that "to diminish the cost to himself would be to reduce his credit with Somerset."²⁹ Bacon's independent presentation of the masque illustrates his desire to perform according to courtly standards, and to create a positive impression with his peers. The concern that courtiers exhibited for the manner and appearance of their performances demonstrates a sensitivity to the implications of their actions.

While courtiers followed standards of behaviour because they were interested in maintaining a certain position at Court, their membership in the institution also reinforced these standards by entailing certain codes of conduct. Goffman claims that a status, a position, or a social place is not "a material thing to be possessed and then displayed", but rather it is "a pattern of appropriate conduct, coherent, embellished, and well-articulated."³⁰ Prominent members of the Court were therefore compelled to follow courtly forms of social expression, as these forms served as a confirmation of their position. Furthermore, Goffman argues that "the higher one's place in the status pyramid, the smaller the number of persons with whom one can be familiar, the less time one spends backstage, and the more likely it is that one will be required to be polite as well as decorous."³¹ The position of courtiers in the early modern status pyramid implies that courtiers were almost always onstage, and had very little time to rest from their performances. While the significance of performances was large when the courtly institution was in a state of equilibrium, it was even more important

²⁹ Akrigg, p.151.

³⁰ Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, p.75.

³¹ Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, p.133. Goffman's perceptions of social status offer support for Elias' belief that attention to behaviour was heightened at the Court. Like Goffman, Elias argues that the practice of etiquette was "an exhibition of court society to itself" and that "each participant had his prestige and his relative power position confirmed by others", Elias, p.101.

during periods that exhibited shifts in the hierarchy. Elias claims that "a shift in the hierarchy that was not reflected in a change of etiquette could not occur", and therefore the slightest change in a courtier's position "meant a change in the order of rank at court and within court society."³² Consequently, those present at Court were "hypersensitive to the slightest change in the mechanism."³³ The implications of Goffman's and Elias' works are that the position of courtier necessitated performative behaviour, and that courtly performances both established an individual's membership in an elite social group and comprised his specific status within the institution. The correlation between status and courtly etiquette suggests that a courtier's behaviour could have been constantly shifting, as described in contemporary sources; however, though a courtier's behaviour might be inconsistent, it was nevertheless representative of the courtier's adherence to courtly codes of conduct rather than of his fickle nature.

Although courtly behaviour was a means of establishing an individual's membership to the Court, it also served to facilitate a courtier's self-expression, and consequently involved social, cultural, and political considerations. While a courtier was expected to visually conform to institutional standards of behaviour, he could employ established codes of manners and their significations to articulate his intentions. Anna Bryson asserts that the expansion of the Royal Court in the sixteenth century encouraged "a kind of politicization of areas of social behaviour which, for the aristocrat or gentleman in his locality, would be governed largely by personal taste."³⁴ While this diversification of codes outside the Court does not have specific implications for the institution, the politicization of social behaviour is significant because it shows that conduct codes can be manipulated for local purposes. This ability to manipulate rituals suggests that courtly behaviour was a system of symbolic actions that only courtiers could decipher and manipulate. The employment and manipulation of these conduct codes therefore illustrates that ritualized behaviour was a form of self-presentation. A courtier could create an

³² Elias, p.88.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ Bryson, p.119.

image of himself by engaging in courtly behaviour: he could use selective ritualized behaviours to evoke their understood symbolisms, present these rituals in a specific manner, and determine the location and audience of these performances. The employment of ritualized behaviour therefore entailed a consideration of political, social, and cultural components. The practice of gift-giving at Court exhibits the complex body of considerations involved in courtly performances. At the marriage of Frances Howard and Robert Carr, John Chamberlain estimated the value of the gifts received as twelve thousand pounds.³⁵ Lindley claims that everyone at Court "judged it in their best interests, whatever scruples they might have had, to perform the obligations of honouring the marriage of the King's favourite, from whom benefits could be expected in future to flow."³⁶ In this single act of gift-giving, the courtier had the political concern of establishing his favour with Somerset, the social concern of ensuring that the value of his gift was comparable to other courtiers, and the cultural concern that the nature of his gift was appropriate to Jacobean courtly standards. The intricacy of courtly performances demonstrates that the Court was not merely a political, social, or cultural entity, and that it must accordingly be evaluated within a framework that comprises all of these elements. Courtly performances show that not only were interactions imbued with personal symbolisms, but also that the Court, as a composite of these varied performances, was an institution of assorted, and even conflicting, concerns.

The complex nature of courtly performances entailed that courtiers often had to suppress their personal feelings, and may have maintained behaviour that they did not inherently support. Goffman asserts that in social interaction an individual may maintain these standards of behaviour because "of a lively belief that an unseen audience is present who will punish deviations from these standards."³⁷ The obligation of the courtier to follow general standards of behaviour has implications for contemporary accusations of the courtly corruption. Although courtiers might have appeared to exhibit corrupt behaviour, this behaviour would have likely been a

³⁵ Lindley, p.123.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, p.81.

facet of their socialized selves, rather than their human selves.³⁸ Sir Francis Bacon describes masques and triumphs as nothing "but toys, to come amongst such serious observations."³⁹ However, since "princes will have such things", he is resigned to accept this practice and participate in these events because it is a component of expected courtly behaviour. This discrepancy between personal desires and the expectations of the Court is also apparent in standards of personal material display. Lady Arbella Stuart had difficulty with finances because she was expected "to maintain a style befitting the King's kingswoman" and her annual income was insufficient to these purposes.⁴⁰ She had to repeatedly appeal to the King for help,⁴¹ yet the importance of her maintaining certain aesthetic standards necessitated this precarious existence. These examples illustrate an incongruity between courtly standards of behaviour and the beliefs of individual courtiers. The suppression of the courtier's personal feelings demonstrates that the courtier's actions were not necessarily representative of his natural character. Therefore, contemporary perceptions of the Court as comprised of immoral and corrupt individuals should not be accepted as a direct depiction of the institution. While certain courtly practices might have appeared corrupt to contemporaries, these practices were often performed without personal motivation. Furthermore, as these practices were a function of the courtly institution, and not of Jacobean courtiers, it is likely that these practices were not exclusive to James I's reign, and should not be employed to support an interpretation of his Court as corrupt.

In addition to illustrating that contemporary judgements of the Court were not directly representative of the institution, a sociological analysis of performative behaviour also indicates the existence of a courtly community. Since courtiers were

³⁸ Goffman claims that there is often a discrepancy between human selves and socialized selves. Humans are "creatures of variable impulse with moods and energies that change from one moment to the next." However, during a performance an individual must not "be subject to ups and downs", Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, p.56.

³⁹ Sir Francis Bacon, "Of Masques and Triumphs," in *The Oxford Authors: Francis Bacon; A Critical Edition of the Major Works*, ed. Brian Vickers (Oxford, 1996), p.416.

⁴⁰ Arkigg, p.117.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

expected to follow common standards of dress, demeanor, and interaction, they cannot be perceived as a group of individuals who are only spatially linked. Courtiers were bound by a common culture, and were fundamental components of the courtly institution itself. The Court was not merely a physical setting for the monarch and his followers to interact, but it was also a function of its members and their behaviours. The Court was therefore a system of ritualized processes that interpolated the political, social, and cultural trends of early modern society. The involvement of courtiers in this community generated links between individuals at Court, and therefore courtiers were not able to act without considering the consequences of their actions on their relationships, or the reception of their actions by the courtly community. Hence, the presence of the courtly community enforced standards of courtly performance. The existence of a courtly community also suggests that those who were not intimately connected to this group did not fully understand its rituals. Thus, contemporaries who were not wholly associated with the Court did not feel the obligation to ascribe to courtly standards of behaviour, and consequently perceived courtly performances as corrupt.

The works of Goffman, Elias, and Bryson illustrate the importance of performance and display to courtly ritual. Courtiers were expected to follow standards of conduct, and were compelled by a courtly community to consider the implications of their actions. Although many contemporary commentaries on Jacobean courtiers characterize these individuals as artificial and corrupt, the performative nature of courtly behaviour entailed that courtiers might exhibit the appearance of these qualities without actually possessing them. The courtier was false in the respect that he often had to suppress his personal desires in order to follow courtly standards of behaviour, but his falseness did not stem from his value of artificiality itself. While the practice of courtly behaviour was necessary for a courtier to maintain his status at Court, he was not completely restricted by courtly codes, for they could be manipulated to the courtier's purposes. A manipulation of these courtly codes was a complex process that required a consideration of political, cultural, and social components. These aspects of performative behaviour have implications for a study of the Jacobean Court. The Court should not be interpreted

as a direct representation of contemporary literature, as it functioned on a level that was incomprehensible to those who were not full members of the institution. Moreover, the Court must be analyzed as a component of all its processes, for it was a product of national politics, royal culture, and social interaction.

The nature of performative behaviour therefore suggests that none of the political, cultural, social, or symbolic components of the Court can be considered independently. These components must be understood as related to, and influenced by, one another through courtly processes. Thus, a comprehensive model of the Court entails a system of interdependent influences and operations.

V.

THE COURT AS DYNAMIC

The Jacobean Court was not entirely configured by its ritualized nature, for the institution was also a system of varied and dynamic processes. Although courtiers followed institutional standards of behaviour, the diversity of personalities and motives contributed to a heterogeneous and fluid Court. The Court was a site of shifting political alliances, officeholders, and positions of favour, as well as a composite of assorted ideologies and courtly attitudes. The Court therefore needs to be understood as an entity that operated within a structured framework, but was nevertheless not static. In other words, the institution did not possess a single culture. Furthermore, the Court cannot be characterized adequately by a few of its numbers or events. While traditional political accounts of the Jacobean Court interpret the institution as largely reflective of the influence of certain favourites or policies, a more comprehensive assessment of the Court involves an analysis of its general political functions and processes. Mary Douglas' description of institutions is helpful, for in *How Institutions Think* Douglas depicts institutions as part of processes, and claims that only individuals, and not institutions, can have purposes. Hence, rather than interpreting the Court as a unitary and static entity characterized by a few of its prominent members and policies, the Court can be understood as a complex and variable institution that operated as a composite of its numerous functions and processes.

Traditional political history of the Jacobean Court typically characterizes the institution by its most influential members. The early years of James' reign are typified by Cecil's prominence, the middle years exhibit the influence of the Howards, and the later years entail Buckingham's monopoly of royal favour. The

historiographical effects of this characterization are predictable. The Court in the beginning of James' reign is understood to operate more effectively and with less corruption. Whereas in the early period of James' reign Cecil's "power over James was only as great as the value of his service"¹, the last half of his reign gives James the reputation of being the King "who indulged favourites [and] undermined the Tudor monarchy and polity."² During the year's of Salisbury's prominence, James continued "to consult others who wasted no opportunity to embarrass or unseat Cecil"³, but when Buckingham's was favourite, it "left the Privy Council with a diminished role".⁴ By the end of James' reign, Buckingham "had become the symbol of everything that had gone wrong in the course of it".⁵ Though these portrayals of the Court are narrowly based, they are not without contemporary support; it was recently claimed that the continued circulation of sodomitical innuendo surrounding James transformed "the figure of the sodomite king from an unpublishable figuration of corrupt favouritism into a standard trope for the abuse of access".⁶ Even James' own writings insinuate the hegemony of Buckingham at Court: James complains that Cecil's influence is so great that he knows "not how to deal with [him]", as he sits "at [his] ease and directs all", while the King's "own resolutions depends upon [Cecil's] posting despatches" when he is away.⁷ In contrast, when James is apart from Buckingham, he writes that he desires "only to live in this world for [his] sake, and that [he] had rather live banished in any part of the earth with [him] than live a sorrowful widow's life without [him]".⁸ Yet despite contemporary depictions of the later Court as opposite in nature its early years, such

¹ Sharpe, p.41.

² Sharpe, p.43.

³ Sharpe, p.41.

⁴ Lockyer, p.176.

⁵ Lockyer, p.175.

⁶ Curtis Perry, "The Politics of Access and Representations of the Sodomite King in Early Modern England," *Renaissance Quarterly*, 53, 4 (2000), p.1079.

⁷ James I to Robert Cecil, Baron Essendon, 5 August, 1604, in *Letters of King James VI and I*, ed. G.P.V. Akrigg (Berkeley, 1984), p.233.

⁸ James I to George Villiers, Duke of Buckingham, December 1623, in *Letters of King James VI and I*, ed. G.P.V. Akrigg (Berkeley, 1984), p.431.

generalizations ignore the actions of its many members, whose activities and influence still contributed to the overall embodiment of the Court.

The importance of an individual courtier's movements within the courtly institution was manifested in the heightened awareness of the courtier "to the slightest change in the mechanism".⁹ While this manifestation had implications for establishing the nature of ritual at the Court, the hypersensitivity of courtiers to fluctuations in the institution also has implications for the nature of courtly politics. Individual courtiers were concerned with changes in courtly dynamics because "to keep abreast of upheavals was vitally important to court people".¹⁰ Not only were shifting ranks significant to the institution as a whole, but they were also important for the individual courtier, for "it was dangerous to be discourteous to a person whose stock was rising, and unduly amiable to a person who was sinking in the hierarchy".¹¹ Elias aptly describes the Court as being in a state of constant fluctuation as well as structured by ritual. Interpretations of the Court that address only one of these qualities ignore or underestimate the purposes, means, and consequences of courtly processes. Courtly rituals served as the means for courtiers to enact their agendas, and fluctuations in courtly politics embodied the success or failure of these individual purposes. An examination of individual courtiers' actions elucidates not only Jacobean courtly rituals, but also personal motives. Attention to the fluid and dynamic state of the Court offers a means of accessing the actions of the individual courtier in addition to an institutional analysis of the Court as a function of ritual.

Elias' depiction of the Court as a fluctuating institution can be supported with Douglas' interpretation of the institution as a function of several processes. Douglas claims that institutions are involved in making decisions for individuals, and therefore they commit such acts as conferring identity and performing classifications. These attributes imply that the institution is involved in more than setting standards for its members, for it is also a composite of active and dynamic processes. While the institution might embody predetermined decisions, it nevertheless encompasses its

⁹ Elias, p.88.

¹⁰ Elias, p.91.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

members before, during, and after the process of making these decisions for them. According to Douglas the Court was a setting that exhibited courtly standards of conduct, but was also actively involved in forming individual courtiers' identities and making judgments for its members. The involvement of the Court in such processes suggests that the institution was constantly in a dynamic state, as the decisions involved in courtly practice would have continuously altered the positions and nature of individual courtiers, as well as the relationships between these individuals. Although the Court acted as the main structural influence for individual courtiers, Douglas' characterization of institutions implies that the Court was also a phenomenon with which courtiers could interact. Since the Court was composed of a large repertoire of courtly processes and decision-making, the courtier would have been able to consider, question, and deny or accept various facets of the institution. In a study of Jacobean fiscal policy, John Cramsie addresses the need for "more political history" that emphasizes the "interrelationships of, and the interactions between, people, institutions, and ideas".¹² While Cramsie's approach focuses on the political components of James' reign, it also acknowledges the significance of relations between human, structural, and ideological aspects of early modern society. Cramsie states that Jacobean policy-making was "a fluid process that defies simple characterization"¹³: since policy-making was a constituent of the courtly institution, the Court can be interpreted as embodying fluid processes. The Jacobean Court was therefore a dynamic institution that was involved in ongoing decisions and interactions with its members on physical and ideological planes.

The fluidity and dynamism of the Court existed at an individual, as well as an institutional, level. While institutions make decisions and classifications for individuals, "personal classification has some degree of autonomy".¹⁴ Individuals do not control the classifying, but they are able to "make choices within the classifications".¹⁵ Douglas' conception of individual autonomy has implications for

¹² Cramsie, p.346.

¹³ Cramsie, p.353.

¹⁴ Douglas, p.102.

¹⁵ *Ibid.* Douglas' conception of individual autonomy with respect to institutional standards is similar to those of Erving Goffman and Anna Bryson, whose works

the early modern Court: since individual courtiers had the ability to engage in decision-making, the Court as an institution would have manifest several diverse and simultaneous processes. This dynamic representation of the Court is evident in such aspects of the courtly structure as the patronage system. Levy Peck describes the political configuration of early Stuart England as "a personal monarchy which ruled through a patrimonial bureaucracy within a hierarchical society structured by patron-client relationships".¹⁶ Although patrons enjoyed a higher social standing than their clients, there was often "no great social distance between patrons, who might be nobility or gentry, and their clients who were other nobility and gentry as well as merchants".¹⁷ The hierarchical structure of the patronage system denoted an institutional level of classification, for it organized individuals according to their relative positions to other individuals, and ordered the roles that their positions permitted and necessitated. Courtiers were required to exhibit the deference required of their standing, and to engage in the currency of gift exchange as complicit with the patronage system. However, courtiers could have also made decisions about the manner and frequency of these deference displays, and would have had some influence over the individuals with which they had affiliations. The ability of the courtier to engage in decision-making would have designated the Court as the national centre of deference exchanges, and therefore typified the institution as a site of action. Since the Court was an active entity, it must be understood as an institution that was constantly fluctuating, and hence cannot be definitively delineated.

That individuals within an institution have the ability to make decisions means that they sought to enact personal agendas. Although individual decisions are guided by institutional standards, only individuals "can intend, plan consciously, and contrive oblique strategies".¹⁸ Thus, while institutions "fix processes that are essentially dynamic",¹⁹ the involvement of individuals in attempting to execute their

suggest that the courtier selectively employed courtly, or institutional, standards of behaviour to achieve his purposes.

¹⁶ Levy Peck, *Court Patronage and Corruption in Early Stuart England*, p.4.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ An institution cannot have purposes, Douglas, p.92.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

intentions ensures that institutions are implicated in dynamic processes. This characterization of institutions supports an interpretation of the Jacobean Court as a site where courtiers were continuously enacting specific behaviour to effect or maintain their desired standings. The Court was composed of individual courtiers with personal, and often conflicting, purposes, acting concurrently to promote themselves in the courtly sphere. The personal motives and actions of individual courtiers in turn propelled the Court's operation, for without complicit acts of courtiers, the Court would have possessed little central authority. Therefore, the actions of courtiers maintained courtly practices, and initiated political, social, and cultural developments. Such individual desire to gain courtly influence had a large impact on the overall factional structure of the Court. For instance, the marriage between Frances Howard and Robert Carr Earl of Somerset was disruptive to courtly politics, and consequently encouraged their rivals to attempt to diminish their influence. The marriage aligned Somerset with the Howard group led by Northampton and Suffolk, and gave this group more control over patronage than it had ever had before.²⁰ To retain the control of the Howards over the Court "the more protestant-leaning Privy Councillors, led by the earl of Pembroke and George Abbot...attempted to distract the king's attention from Somerset with George Villiers".²¹ The purposeful placement of Villiers at the Court by the Protestant faction shows the impact that courtiers' actions could have on the general organization of the institution. Thus, the implication of Douglas' characterizations for the Court is that it was dynamic and fluid on several levels: while the actions of individual courtiers personified the Court as a site of action, these actions also had larger effects on the institution, for they had the ability to shape the demography of the Court. The Court as a whole was therefore a fluid institution in which the formation of its members was in a state of flux.

The fluctuating nature of the Jacobean Court indicates that the institution cannot be defined by a single political characteristic. Although historians generally characterize the Court by its prominent members, the purposes of other individual

²⁰ Croft, *King James*, p.90.

²¹ *Ibid.*

courtiers were constantly in play. Among the early modern English courts, the Jacobean Court had a particularly hybrid nature, as it was composed of both English and Scottish courtiers. Several historians concede that James intended to divide the Court equally between the two groups of courtiers,²² yet many English courtiers felt that the Scots had a monopoly over the King's patronage. Since James reappointed many of the Elizabethan Privy Councillors, he ensured that "his immediate court entourage, the Bedchamber, was staffed almost exclusively by Scots".²³ Adamson claims that the Scottish Bedchamber was "catastrophic for James' relations with the English governing elite",²⁴ echoing Sir John Holles' assertion that the Scots "not only...possess the royal presence, they be warm within, while the best of [the English] starve without".²⁵ The presence of English and Scottish courtiers at the Jacobean Court suggests that the institution was involved in conflicting purposes and cannot be interpreted as embodying a single, basic struggle for patronage. Not only did the appointment of Scottish courtiers to the Bedchamber itself create tensions between the English and the Scottish, but the importance of the Bedchamber within the courtly institution also altered the organization of politics. The Bedchamber was "the most important substantive product of the political settlement of the succession", and it is therefore unsurprising "that it continued to be of central political importance during the reign".²⁶ The significance of the Bedchamber within the Court, and the nature of the Bedchamber as primarily Scottish, entailed that "even the inner councillors no longer had an automatic claim to the nearest access to the monarch".²⁷ The Bedchamber and the Council became "separate entities with separate

²² Pauline Croft states that James seems to have "initially envisaged a court equally divided between the English and the Scots as another expression of the Union", Croft, *King James*, p.57.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ Adamson, p.112.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ Starkey, p.177.

²⁷ Starkey, p.197. Roger Lockyer agrees with Starkey's interpretation of the importance of the Bedchamber. Lockyer claims that the Gentlemen of the Bedchamber were a rival source of influence to the Councillors, because they were well placed to make their views known and advance the interests of their clients, Lockyer, p.165.

membership", and Council and minister "revolved in a different orbit from the king and Bedchamber".²⁸ The Court was therefore composed of diverse purposes, and conflicting areas of influence. Consequently, the Court should be interpreted as a composite of various political agendas and influences, rather than as an institution that represented a singular Jacobean policy.

The heterogeneity of the Jacobean Court existed not only in the diversity of courtly purposes and influences, but also in the undefined nature of courtly positions. Influential members of the Court had positions that were relatively permanent, yet less prominent members of the institution would not always have been present at Court. The Jacobean Court employed "quarter waiters" because it quadrupled the number of positions available within the institution, for those holding these positions only held their posts for three months of the year.²⁹ This added to the general fluidity of the Court, and created regular fluctuations within the courtly institution independent of changes due to individual political motivations. Therefore, the diverse nature of the Court was not only a consequence of personal actions, but it was also a regularized effect of courtly operations. Hence, the ritualized character of the Court also comprised elements of change: the Court was a standardized entity, but one of the aspects of courtly affairs was a deliberate rotation of its members. This undefined quality of the Court's members was further compounded by individual courtier's overlapping responsibilities. Though courtiers were very sensitive about status and station, their positions at Court were not always clearly demarcated. While most courtiers were somewhat defined by their posts, some courtiers complicated this identification by holding more than one appointment.³⁰ Akrigg argues that "the dichotomy so clear to us between the government of the realm and the personal household staff of the monarch was far from being plain to them".³¹ This perspective suggests that Elias' assertion of a courtly hypersensitivity to fluctuations in the institution³² might have stemmed from a concern to establish the basic positions of

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ Akrigg, p.171.

³⁰ Akrigg, p.28.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² Elias, p.88.

courtiers. Even the fundamental components of the Court's composition were often difficult to discern.

The undefined and fluid character of the Jacobean Court was also represented in the heterogeneity of its culture. R. Malcolm Smuts asserts that the Jacobean period "failed to define any clear stylistic preferences", for "individual patrons had pronounced tastes, but collectively the court patronized a surprisingly large range of styles".³³ Jacobean court culture "was far less cohesive than that of either Elizabeth or Charles' reign": it included such forms as neoclassicism, neomedievalism, provincialism, and cosmopolitanism.³⁴ Smuts also claims that Stuart Court culture was "at once an outgrowth of the trend toward a more urbanized and cosmopolitan aristocratic society and an expression of a deep mistrust of the transformations this trend was bringing about".³⁵ Moreover, Smuts believes that historians have failed to appreciate this ambiguity.³⁶ The diverse, and even self-contradictory nature of Jacobean court culture exhibits the assorted tastes of Jacobean courtiers, and their respective abilities to patronize their personal artistic expressions. The lack of cohesiveness of Jacobean court culture compared to that of the Elizabethan or Caroline courts suggests that it consisted of a broad range of individuals and perspectives. However, it also suggests that individuals might themselves be conflicted about their personal viewpoints. Zagorin states that the nature of Court life "evoked ambivalent attitudes in all who had to do with it".³⁷ Such ambivalence would have been manifested in court culture, and therefore emphasizes the importance of individual courtiers' influence on the courtly institution. Hence, the undefined nature of Jacobean court culture illustrates both the multifaceted nature of

³³ Smuts, *Court Culture and the Origins of a Royalist Tradition in Early Stuart England*, p.63.

³⁴ Smuts, "Cultural Diversity and Cultural Change at the Court of James I", p.100. The diversity of Jacobean court culture was even evident in such mediums as court sermons. Peter E. McCullough argues that "the pulpit stood at the centre of the court's cultural life and gave voice to a surprisingly diverse body of conformist thought", McCullough.

³⁵ Smuts, *Court Culture and the Origins of a Royalist Tradition in Early Stuart England*, p.8.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ Zagorin, p.43.

the Court and the significance of the individual courtier in creating the identity of the institution. The Court was thus an institution that was fundamentally cohesive in terms of its rituals, but also very reliant upon its members to enact their personal agendas that ensured the maintenance of a full and flourishing court culture.

The heterogeneity of the Court on both an institutional and local level suggests that certain historiographical interpretations of the Jacobean Court need to be reconsidered. One of the primary characterizations of the Court politics is that it consisted of battling factions. S. J. Houston claims that Court factions were so pervasive that they hampered the effectiveness of the Commons,³⁸ and Menna Prestwich similarly states that under James, "court factions, already a cause of instability in the Privy Council of Elizabeth, injected its poison into Parliament".³⁹ However, some historians have suggested the nature of factions and their role at Court made them less influential than it has been previously supposed. Robert Shephard claims that while causes and ideologies "could not get very far if they were not espoused by a Court faction",⁴⁰ many factions consisted of "widely divergent views, resulting in factions without a coherent position on issues of policy and/or religion".⁴¹ The ability of a faction to exist without a coherent agenda implies that factions might not have had a direct and consistent effect on Jacobean policy. Although there were factions that had specific values, the diversity of opinion in a faction could have contributed to the faction operating as a general body of support for its members, rather than as a group particularly concerned with effecting political policy. As well as embodying diverse views, factions were also susceptible to change. Structures of political patronage "were not static but changed over time": these structures were "sensitive to the changing political and economic power of the

³⁸ Houston lists several examples of the interference of factions with politics: in 1614, Sir Ralph Winwood's work in the Commons was sabotaged because he was opposed by the Howard family; in 1621 Court faction encouraged the Commons to destroy the career of Sir Francis Bacon; in 1624 Buckingham went into partnership with the opposition to destroy Cranfield, Houston, p.35.

³⁹ Menna Prestwich, *Cranfield: Business and Politics under the Early Stuarts* (Oxford, 1966), p.136.

⁴⁰ Shephard, p.731.

⁴¹ Shephard, p.730.

Crown, of different elements of the political elite, and of such institutions as the church and parliament".⁴² Levy Peck argues that the fluidity and fragility of patronage networks "belies the menace of factional rivalry".⁴³ Her interpretation of courtly patronage illustrates the dynamic nature of factions, and that the Court cannot be characterized by concrete, opposing factions. Both Shephard's and Levy Peck's works propose that though factions were a significant component of the Jacobean Court, they were not the institution's foundational unit of organization. Since factions consisted of diverse individuals, and were often fluctuating, they show that the Court was more a composite of dynamic individuals than one structured by distinct groups. The fluidity of factions therefore suggests that the only consistent aspect of the Court was its values and rituals. Thus, the dynamic nature of the Court has implications for historiographical interpretations of courtly politics, for the institution should not be understood as one that was controlled by competing factions.

Douglas' work shows that institutions are neither static, nor independent of the actions of their members. She suggests that institutions should be understood as parts of multiple processes. They are more than concrete, physical entities that set standards for their members; they are also partly produced by the purposes of, and interactions between, their members. The implication of the Court's fluid and interactive nature is that it was a heterogeneous institution, since it was constantly shifting, and subject to the influence of its diverse members. The Court was not a product of its prominent members, nor was it typified by single occurrences. Therefore, the institution needs to be perceived as reflective, on some level, of all its members and their interactions. Such a conception of the Court again implies that the institution was a function of its processes and rituals, for its other fluctuating qualities do not represent the Court as a whole. Thus, the dynamic nature of the Court also emphasizes its ritualized character, for without standardized values and behaviours, the Court could not have been maintained as a cohesive entity. However, though courtly rituals tempered all components of the Court, the Court's politics were not homogeneous. Courtly politics were a consequence of individual courtiers' actions:

⁴² Levy Peck, *Court Patronage and Corruption in Early Stuart England*, p.31.

⁴³ Levy Peck, *Court Patronage and Corruption in Early Stuart England*, p.54.

these individual courtiers had diverse purposes, complex loyalties, and were involved in relationships that were constantly evolving. The Jacobean Court was therefore a ritualized institution that was nevertheless characterized by diversity and change.

The dynamic character of the Jacobean Court illustrates the significance of all courtly persons and processes. Therefore, an accurate understanding of the Court entails an acknowledgement of any interactions and functions associated with the institution. The diversity of courtly culture necessitates a comprehensive assessment of the Jacobean Court.

VI. THE COURT AS POROUS

An understanding of the Jacobean Royal Court is made complex not only by its heterogeneous nature, but also by its open, and reciprocal relationship with the rest of the nation. Several works on the Jacobean Court posit the institution as an isolated entity, but more recent historiographical approaches acknowledge that the courtly sphere of interaction was not limited to the physical setting of the Court. The Court had a very defined centre that involved courtiers behaving according to courtly codes of conduct. However, the peripheries of the Court are less easily defined: the Court was influenced by urban and European culture, and members of the Court maintained their own residences and often served abroad. The physical porosity of the Court led to a contemporary concern about the permeability of the institution. The actions of Jacobean courtiers suggest that the porous nature of the Court was a matter of genuine significance, for courtiers made efforts to emphasize their unique courtly qualities and consequently discourage potential upstarts to the Court. Frank Whigham proposes that courtiers supported courtesy literature because it affirmed their entitlement to their courtly positions.¹ Since courtiers followed the dictates of politesse prescribed in the courtesy literature, they perceived themselves as exceptional members of English society. This contemporary concern for the movement of unauthorized courtiers into the Court illustrates the nature of the Court as a porous institution. This conception implies that the Court was not isolated from the rest of the nation, that courtiers were not extraordinary individuals, and that movement into the Court was possible. Furthermore, since the Court was intimately connected to the rest of the nation, courtiers would have likely considered both influences independent of the

¹ Whigham, xi.

Court, and the effects of their actions on the rest of the nation. Ultimately, the porousness of the Court indicates that the institution cannot be concretely defined, since it existed as a component of its context. Whigham's work on courtesy theory suggests that the Court was a porous entity, and hence the interactive relationship between the Court and the rest of the nation impedes the establishment of a distinct definition of the institution.

Recent historiographical interpretations of the Jacobean Royal Court acknowledge it as a porous institution. Malcolm Smuts claims that such historians as W.P. Thomas, Perez Zagorin, and Lawrence Stone attempted to portray court culture "as an outgrowth of larger social and political conditions", but "have little sympathy for the Court" which they treated as "an isolated hothouse environment, harbouring a society that was frivolous, corrupt, fond of novelty and luxury, sexually permissive and imbued with a cosmopolitan sympathy for popery and absolution".² However, Smuts believes that in order to understand Jacobean court culture, we must "abandon the notion that it developed within an exclusive, self-contained setting, somehow cut off from the nation at large".³ He defines the Court as "an institution with a distinct nucleus and a vaguely defined periphery".⁴ This definition of the Court concurs with the interpretation of the institution as central to the nation, and therefore intimately connected to early modern English society in terms of central values and symbols. Since the Court embodied the foundational values of early modern England, it must have been accessible to the rest of the nation on some level, for the Court had to be in a position to absorb contemporary trends, and to display its values to English society. Thus, at least on a theoretical plane, the Court's relationship to the rest of the nation must have been one that was open and fluid.

The physical position of the Court in early modern England also supports the perspective of a porous institution. The Court itself cannot be defined as a single, monolithic entity, for it existed simultaneously in several locations. Since James brought a family with him to England, the structure of his Court was more complex

² Smuts, "Cultural Diversity and Cultural Change at the Court of James I", p.102.

³ Smuts, "Cultural Diversity and Cultural Change at the Court of James I", p.103.

⁴ Smuts, *Court Culture and the Origins of a Royalist Tradition in Early Stuart England*, p.4.

than its Elizabethan predecessor: there were "courts within the Court", for the Queen had "an establishment with her own council, chancellor, lord steward, lord chamberlain, master of the horse, and her own household", and a separate establishment was maintained for Prince Henry and Princess Elizabeth.⁵ The Court was not a single unit that housed all courtly affairs. Events at any of the three royal households would affect the courtly establishment as a whole. The complexity of the Jacobean courtly structure is especially significant because Prince Henry's Court at St. James was often interpreted as an adversarial site to the establishment at Whitehall. Prince Henry's separate establishment was "sharply differentiated in tone from the Court" we are told, and that before he died his institution "would become almost an official centre of opposition to James' government".⁶ Prince Henry's political policies differed from his father's, and St. James' became "the focal point of the hope of the old Elizabethan war party".⁷ His foreign policy showed "a total commitment to the Pan-European cause in Europe, in which England should manifest its leadership in acts of assertion and not ones of passive mediation".⁸ Hence, while the Jacobean reign is generally understood as one embracing peaceful relations with the Continent, a more comprehensive conception of the Court illustrates the existence of contradictory views within the larger institution. Thus, a comprehensive understanding of the Jacobean Court entails a consideration of those affairs beyond Whitehall that were nevertheless associated with the courtly sphere in English society.

In addition to the existence of separate courtly establishments, the movements of individual courtiers also contributed to the dispersed structure of the Jacobean Court. Many individuals did not spend all of their time at Court. Most prominent courtiers maintained their own household near Whitehall, each "a miniature court in

⁵ Akrigg, p.28.

⁶ McElwee, p.172. For a description of Prince Henry's Court, see Lesley B. Cormack, "Twisting the Lion's Tail: Practice and Theory at the Court of Henry Prince of Wales," in *Patronage and Institutions: Science, Technology, and Medicine at the European Court, 1500-1750*, ed. Bruce T. Moran (New York, 1991), 67-84.

⁷ Strong, p.70.

⁸ *Ibid.*

its own right which functioned as the nerve center for its owner's affinity".⁹ Consequently, "no firm social or geographical boundaries ever separated the Court from other fashionable milieu in the capital".¹⁰ Important social and cultural events often took place in courtiers' residences rather than the king's,¹¹ and royal servants and "country squire up for the Season" lived in the same neighbourhoods, and "sometimes formed close bonds".¹² The interaction between courtiers and outsiders to the Court illustrates the wide influence of those involved in courtly affairs, and the ability of those removed from the Court to affect courtly persons. The involvement of the Court in English society was so extensive that "any attempt to distinguish sharply between the Court's culture and that of fashionable London will run into difficulties".¹³ The overlap between courtly and urban culture reminds us that in spite of exclusive courtly rituals, the Court was not a closed system. For instance, though Jonson wrote masques specifically for courtly audiences, he also wrote plays for London theatres and poems for country peers and gentry.¹⁴ Thus, even if those outside the courtly sphere were not able to experience courtly forms of entertainment, they could still access artistic works influenced by a courtly style and consciousness. The influence of the Court was therefore not limited to the confines of the physical setting of the institution. Courtly life infiltrated peripheral sectors of society, and individuals that were not considered members of the Court had the ability to interact with those that were, and in this manner affect the Court itself.¹⁵ Hence, the

⁹ Smuts, *Court Culture and the Origins of a Royalist Tradition in Early Stuart England*, p.55.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ Smuts, "Cultural Diversity and Cultural Change at the Court of James I", p.104.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ In an article examining urban growth in the London's West End, Smuts shows that at times non-courtly influences were more dominant than courtly influences. Elizabeth I, James I, and Charles I disliked the growing West End because it encouraged the migration of gentry into the city and away from the farm, it cheapened the gentility in the city because they were so abundant, and it fostered an unhealthy political awareness among its inhabitants. However, despite the monarchs' efforts to limit growth, the West End continued to expand, R. Malcolm Smuts, "The

interactions between courtly persons and non-courtly individuals placed the Court into an inextricable network of cultural exchange with those not immediately associated with the institution.

Not only was the Court involved in exchanges with non-courtly individuals in English society, but it was also engaged in relationships with individuals from abroad. Foreign ambassadors were a regular component of the early modern European court, and throughout James' reign the English Court both accommodated ambassadors, and sent domestic ambassadors to other courts. Ambassadors were especially active in the seventeenth century, for the wars of the previous century "had given way to a period of uneasy peace, and the international situation had become fluid".¹⁶ There were two types of ambassadors in this period, including the ordinary resident ambassador, who usually served for three years and "attended to the routine of diplomacy", and the special or extraordinary ambassador of ceremony.¹⁷ This ambassador, "a signal gesture of honour and friendship", was usually an aristocrat of the highest rank, came with a retinue of hundreds, and stayed for only a brief period.¹⁸ Ambassadors engaged in courtly standards of behaviour generally restricted to members of the Court. In 1604, Velasco, the Constable of Castile and Duke of Frias, came to the English Court for a visit that was primarily ceremonial. During his visit, Velasco engaged in the courtly practice of gift exchange with the royal family and influential English courtiers. Velasco presented James with a cup that cost almost three thousand pounds¹⁹, and gave the Queen a goblet and three diamond pendants.²⁰ Other recipients of Spanish gifts included the Countess of Suffolk, the Countess of Bedford, the Countess of Rutland, the Earls of Southampton, Pembroke, Salisbury, Devonshire and Northampton.²¹ In return, James' gifts to the Spanish were

Court and its Neighbourhood: Royal Policy and Urban Growth in the Early Stuart West End", *The Journal of British Studies*, 30, 2 (1991), p.129-149.

¹⁶ Akrigg, p.56.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ Alan Haynes, *Robert Cecil, Earl of Salisbury, 1563-1612: Servant of Two Sovereigns* (London, 1989), p.124.

²⁰ Haynes, p.125.

²¹ *Ibid.*

extravagant, and included gold items weighing almost three hundred ounces and a gold plate weighing nearly twenty-nine thousand ounces.²² These exchanges illustrate the ability of the Spanish ambassador to participate in behaviour that was understood, and appreciated, by members of the Jacobean Court. If foreigners to the Court could interact with English courtiers through ritualized forms of courtly behaviour, then it is apparent that the courtly sphere was not limited to those that were permanent members of the institution.

Foreign ambassadors also often attempted to actively influence Jacobean politics, especially by manipulating factions²³. Most leading Jacobean courtiers took pensions from the Spanish, French, and Dutch, and often from more than one at the same time.²⁴ These exchanges indicate that the motives of individual courtiers might have been more complex than those entailing their personal agendas. Courtiers were susceptible to other factors, and forwarded plans that were reflective of foreign motivations. Because of the ability of foreigners to influence domestic politics, political events could have appeared incongruent with the context of Jacobean society. However, this lack of congruency was not exclusive to the Jacobean Court, for English courtiers also attempted to influence policy at foreign courts. In a letter to Sir David Murray, a Gentleman of the Bedchamber to Prince Henry, Sir Henry Wotton writes from an ambassadorship in Venice asking Murray to convince Henry to request the release of a Venetian criminal. Wotton claims that the criminal's delivery will be "very sure and speedy" if the Prince were to express "his desire thereof unto the Venetian ambassador somewhat warmly by [Murray] or some other sent unto him, or sending for the ambassador himself or his secretary; provided that the suit seem to come from the Prince himself without a solicitation, who will urge his (com)mandment [in Venice] with the more (stre)ngth".²⁵ Wotton makes this request because the man who has been imprisoned is his "friend", and he is someone

²² *Ibid.*

²³ Levy Peck, *Court Patronage and Corruption in Early Stuart England*, p.54.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ Sir Henry Wotton to Sir David Murray, Venice, 24 April 1608, in *The Life and Letters of Sir Henry Wotton*, ed. Logan Pearsall Smith, vol. I (Oxford, 1966), p.427-8.

"to whom [he] ha[s] been much beholden".²⁶ This letter illustrates an English interference into Venetian affairs that stems from an individual courtier's personal wishes. Although for Prince Henry, the Venetian's fate was probably immaterial, Wotton's desire for his friend's release had the potential to initiate a series of events requiring mediations between prominent national personages. Wotton's request displays the influence of the Jacobean Court outside the courtly institution, and even beyond the peripheries of English society. Thus, the interference of foreign ambassadors at the Jacobean Court, and the involvement of English courtiers in affairs at other courts, show that the early modern Court was a porous and pervasive institution.

The porous nature of the Jacobean Court provided many benefits for its members, yet it also was an issue of concern for courtiers intent on preserving the exclusivity of the institution. Frank Whigham argues that courtesy literature was idealist guidance for the courtier to make his life "a work of art" and use his powers "to guide the court toward a higher morality".²⁷ Courtesy literature had "an intricate social purpose combining poetry and politics, philosophical speculation and social combat, ritual pageantry and ambition".²⁸ Whigham believes that courtesy literature "helped create and sustain the court's view of its own virtue and centrality"²⁹, and that those "who feared they would be displaced proposed the distinctions found in courtesy literature in order to maintain their preeminence".³⁰ The primary implication of Whigham's study is that the early modern Court was in fact porous, and more specifically, that this permeability entailed a movement of non-courtly individuals into the Court. This implication can be supported with contemporary evidence, for several Jacobean individuals expressed their opinions on outsiders becoming established members of the courtly institution. In a masque by George Chapman performed during the nuptials of Princess Elizabeth in 1613, the character Capriccio, described as "a man of wit", discusses the possibility of advancement to the Court.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ Whigham, x.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ Whigham, xi.

Capriccio argues that if "an honest Shoemaker...was knighted for making a cleane boote", then it should be possible for him to "bee aduancet in Court, or Counsaile" for "breaking a cleane Iest".³¹ At the least, Capriccio feels that he should be "serued out for an Ambassador to a dull Climate".³² Chapman's description of advancement implies that in Jacobean society it was often unwarranted and too easily accomplished. A shoemaker is rewarded for merely accomplishing his job properly, and Capriccio's emphasis on jesting insinuates that the system of advancement to the Court is akin to a joke. Chapman's portrayal of advancement shows both that the movement of non-courtly persons into the Court was possible, and that members of the institution often perceived with distrust or disdain.

According to Whigham, not only was the courtier concerned to maintain the privilege of his status, he was also willing to actively prevent others from appropriating or damaging this privilege. These active measures involved adopting distinct forms of behaviour exclusive to members of the Court. Like Goffman, Bryson, and Elias, Whigham believes that courtiers expressed themselves through game, courtly display and interaction.³³ These expressions followed the prescriptions of courtesy literature, and since the literature contained many contradictions³⁴, it could be "adapted for the needs of the moment".³⁵ Courtly codes of behaviour served both a permissive and a preventative purpose: a courtier followed these forms of behaviour in order to legitimize his presence at Court, but also performed these acts to inhibit the influx of outsiders into the institution. The courtier's practice of self-manifestation was simultaneously limiting and empowering, for the gentleman was required to act in certain ways, but the symbolism of these acts provided him with an

³¹ George Chapman, "The Memorable Maske of the Two Honorable Houses or Innes of Court; The Middle Temple and Lincolns Inne As it was performd before the King, at White-Hall on Shroue Munday at night; being the 15. of February. 1613," *Early English Books Online*, ed. Alfred W. Pollard (Ann Arbor, Mass., 1999), <http://www.library.ualberta.ca/databases/databaseinfo/index.cfm?ID=3089>.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ Whigham, p.29.

³⁴ Whigham, p.28.

³⁵ Whigham, p.29.

ascriptive identity that "by definition [could not] be achieved by human effort".³⁶ Although the courtier followed the dictates of courtesy literature, he also sought to deemphasize his efforts at self-manifestation and to emphasize that he possessed something that could not "be achieved or escaped because it [was] never fully defined or specified".³⁷ Ritualized forms of courtly behaviour were significant in terms of providing a framework for courtly persons; however, equally significant to the courtier was the ability to disguise the contrived nature of his actions. Because the Court was a porous entity, courtiers had to establish their distinctiveness through means that were difficult to replicate. While behaviour could be learned, individuals that were not members of the Court would not have possessed the apparent *sprezzatura* of courtly politesse. The porous nature of the Court therefore complicated the courtier's role, for his adherence to ritualized behaviours had to be complemented by a more prominent form of legitimization that could not be specifically defined or identified by an outsider.

Although Whigham stresses the importance of the courtier manifesting a sense of natural entitlement, his argument nevertheless implies that courtesy literature provided a means for aspirers to the Court to achieve their goals. Levy Peck argues that the performative nature of patronage entailed a contemporary concern for courtesy books.³⁸ Courtesy books were of especial interest to aspirers of the Court, for in them "the symbolic behaviour of the courtier was packaged and sold as a commodity".³⁹ This reified compilation of courtly virtues illustrates the significance of status and the centrality of the Court in early modern England. Since individuals in this society were concerned with status, and courtesy literature gave individuals instruction on the intricacies of courtly behaviour, movement into the Court seems to be possible. If the Court was in fact accessible to individuals independent of the institution, then Smuts' interpretation of the Court as not embodying a hothouse environment is likely more representative of the institution than is an understanding of the Court as an isolated environment. If the Court was not an isolated entity, then

³⁶ Whigham, p.33.

³⁷ Whigham, p.35.

³⁸ Levy Peck, "For a King Not to be Bountiful Were a Fault?", p.35.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

courtiers cannot be considered wholly courtly beings, and therefore are not entirely dissimilar to other individuals in English society. Courtiers must consequently be understood as only partially reflective of their privileged status: while they attempted to portray their superiority by making their actions appear effortless and natural, they were also largely affected by courtly codes of conduct. Members of the Court should not be considered to be entirely exceptional individuals, and therefore an understanding of the Jacobean courtier should focus on his function and behaviour. Thus, the commodity of the courtier provides evidence for the nature of the courtly members, and consequently of the Court as a whole.

Another implication of Whigham's work is that the porous nature of the Court would have caused a heightened sensitivity to the world outside of the Court. Since the Court could be affected by outside influences, and by new members, it would have been necessary for courtiers to be aware of affairs in the rest of the nation, and in the courts of foreign relations. Smuts claims that the courtier "inhabited a polycentric world" that revolved "not only around the privy apartments but a number of other institutions, prominent among them the households of court peers".⁴⁰ Though Smuts provides a convincing description of the physical sphere of the courtier, the implications of a porous Court suggest that the courtier's polycentric world extended beyond his physical attendance. The courtier was concerned about society in general, for threats to his position were not restricted to those locations that he inhabited. Furthermore, the courtier was anxious to preserve his personal reputation, as reports of his actions extended beyond the institution. Therefore, the courtier's concern for his personal social credit fostered a consideration for general social values. Hence, contemporary and historiographical accusations of the Jacobean courtier being a selfish individual are not entirely accurate, for the courtier would have predicted the reception of his actions, and acted in a manner that would not have been perceived as inappropriate. The porous character of the Court thus entailed that the courtier was affected by the world outside the courtly sphere, and perceived his consideration of this exterior society as a component of his courtly responsibility.

⁴⁰ Smuts, "Cultural Diversity and Cultural Change at the Court of James I". p.104.

Although the Court was a highly structured institution, both the physical position of the Court and courtly anxiety about preserving the elite quality of the institution's positions indicate that the Court was not distinctly defined. The Jacobean Court embodied a number of separate establishments, had intimate ties with London culture and individuals, and also shared a reciprocal influence with foreign European courts. The Court's relationships with areas that were peripheral to the institution suggest that the boundaries of the Court extended beyond the physical boundaries of the courtly establishment. While the porosity of the Court provided its members with a wider sphere of influence and interaction, it also caused concern with courtiers about the accessibility it gave non-courtly individuals to the Court.

Whigham claims that courtiers were anxious to preserve the exclusivity of their positions, and therefore adopted forms of behaviour prescribed in courtesy literature to prevent outsiders from being able to interact with others in the courtly institution. However, the interaction between courtiers and non-courtly individuals implies that courtiers were never completely distinct from the rest of society, and that they should not be understood as entirely engrossed in courtly concerns. Even though the porousness of the Court illuminates the interactive nature of the Court as a whole, and the operations of individual courtiers, it also complicates our understanding of the Court by incorporating processes that were not directly associated with the institution. This theme shows that the Court was not defined as a composite of its physical establishments, despite the frequency that courtly affairs coincided with courtly locations. Rather, the porosity of the Court entailed that it was a function of its simultaneous individuals, interactions, values, and processes.

CONCLUSION

The application of sociological and anthropological models of institutions and ritualized behaviour to a study of the Court has several implications for current Court historiography. Although many historical interpretations of the Court posit the institution as corrupt, an understanding of the courtly embodiment of ritualized behaviour and display suggest that contemporary perceptions of corruption are not reflective of the Court's true nature. Courtiers were required to follow courtly codes of conduct, and therefore their behaviour was representative of these courtly codes rather than of their motivations. Characterizations of the Jacobean courtier as immoral and artificial must therefore be considered in the context of courtly processes, and not merely accepted on the account of their apparent accuracy. Although a courtier might seem to embrace corrupt forms of culture, the demonstration of courtly magnificence was an accepted and expected form of courtly behaviour. A courtier might not have even enjoyed overt expressions of courtly grandeur, but nonetheless would have displayed these forms of splendour because of his association with the institution. Hence, a consideration of the functions of the courtly institution and the individual courtier illustrates the need to reevaluate contemporary claims of courtly corruption.

This functional approach to the Court also has implications for negative historiographical assessments of the Jacobean Court. While the Jacobean Court has often been construed as contributing to the breakdown that resulted in the Civil War, the understanding that the Court was not a depraved and self-serving institution suggests that it did not propel the polity towards war. Since the centrality of the Court in early modern society entailed that it was an integral component of the English nation, the Court cannot be interpreted as an isolated institution that alienated

popular affection. Jacobean England did not witness a total opposition between the Court and the Country: the Jacobean Court was not an internalized institution that severed its ties with the localities, and upset the natural interaction between the central and peripheral aspects of society. In addition to not being indicative of processes leading towards the Civil War, neither did the Jacobean Court represent a degradation from the Elizabethan Court. Several scholars claim that the Jacobean Court was more extravagant and immoral than the Court under Elizabeth, but most of these claims lack context, and allow a negative portrayal of James to influence a reading of the Court. Although many contemporary commentaries on the Jacobean Court assert its immorality, the Elizabethan Court was also structured by ritualized behaviours and courtly display, so the perceived corruption of the Court under James involved processes that were common to all early modern courts. Furthermore, merely making such moral evaluations does not establish an effective history of the Court: the Court needs to be understood first as a functional institution.

The understanding of the Court as a functional institution informs not only the historiography of the Jacobean Court, but also illuminates the nature of the institution itself. A sociological analysis of the institution indicates that the Jacobean Court was a porous institution that enjoyed constant, regularized interaction with the rest of English society. Although the Court was ordered by ritual and standardized behaviours, it was also involved in continuous fluctuation. Therefore, a more effective understanding of the Court involves a definition of the institution as a composite of its various processes and interactions, rather than as a concrete unit that merely served as a setting for its members' affairs. Thus, a functional understanding of the Court suggests that the institution was in a state of flux, and that it was accessible to outsiders of the Court. The Court cannot therefore be interpreted as isolated and inherently extraordinary. The porous and dynamic nature of the Court entails that the boundaries between the institution and the nation were not clearly defined, and consequently that the Court cannot be segregated from the rest of society in our historiography.

Another conclusion that can be made about the Jacobean Court is that it was not a homogeneous entity. The Court was a site consisting of diverse peoples,

factions, actions, and events. While many historians characterize the institution through its most prominent features, the Court was a product of all its interactions and processes, and cannot be classified in a straightforward manner. Because the Court had a complex and composite nature, any characterizations of the institution must consider all courtly functions, and all coexisting forms of purpose and action. A comprehensive understanding of the institution requires an emphasis on the operational rituals of the Court. Since the Court was a heterogeneous conglomerate of people and events, an examination of the institution in its entirety entails the employment of a framework for all courtly processes, rather than a superficial reading of the Court through its most influential courtiers and episodes.

The significance of this study extends beyond the implications for the courtly institution. While establishing a comprehensive understanding of the Court is a desirable goal for court historiography, it is also a fundamental component of early modern English history in general. The centrality of the Court in early modern England signifies its involvement in the political, social, and cultural processes of the nation. Therefore without a clearer understanding of the Royal Court, our perspective of English society is neither complete nor accurate. Specifically, an understanding of the courtly institution in sociological terms offers insight into the position of the Court within English society, and the relationship it shared with non-courtly establishments and individuals. This framework shows that the Court was both an influential and reflective constituent of early modern culture, and thus a study of court culture can inform our conceptions of English culture. The significance of the Jacobean Royal Court in English society was indisputable; therefore establishing a comprehensive and authentic understanding of the Court is a necessary task for the study of early modern England.

A sociological analysis of the Court is also relevant for our understanding of institutions in general. While the processes inherent to early modern culture are not pertinent to all types of society, this study illustrates basic institutional functions that are characteristic of most organizations. An analysis of the Jacobean Court yields that institutions are complex, and often self-contradictory, entities that are maintained through the reproduction of ritual. This study also shows that institutions cannot be

narrowly defined, for such a definition does not acknowledge all the processes affecting the overall balance of the institution. Furthermore, an institution cannot be interpreted as an isolated phenomenon, as its relationships to other sectors of society are part of its daily operations and functions. The functioning of the Jacobean Royal Court illustrates that the institution embodied a combination of ritual and change: the Court was regulated by a system of ritualized behaviours, and these standardizations coexisted with constant fluctuations in the composition and orientation of its members. Ultimately, the study of the Jacobean Royal Court indicates that an institution is a complex and dynamic entity that needs to be understood through a simultaneous consideration of its members, values, processes, functions, operations, and events.

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